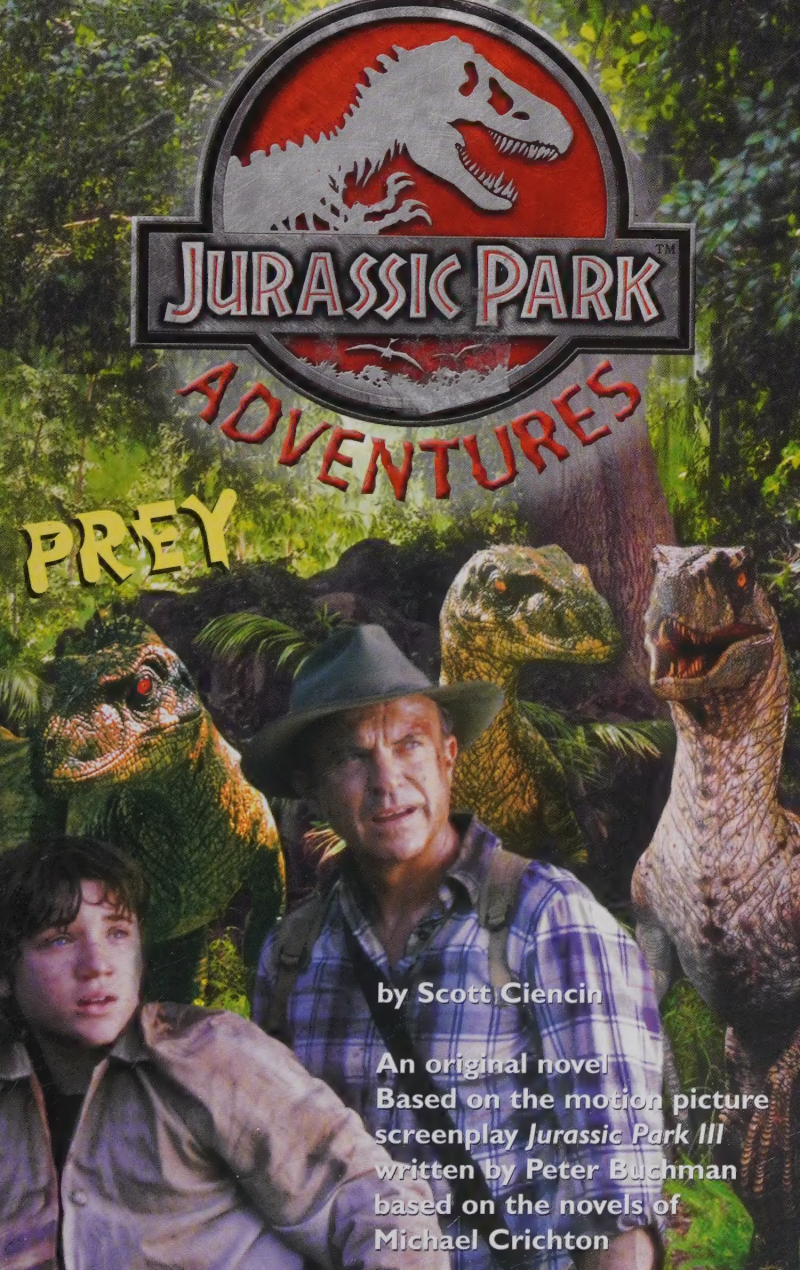

JURASSIC PARK™
ADVENTURES
PREY
by Scott Ciencin
An original novel
Based on the motion picture
screenplay *Jurassic Park III*
written by Peter Buchman
based on the novels of
Michael Crichton

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023

https://archive.org/details/prey0000scot

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

Announcement of Address
September 1
10:00 AM

Speaker: Dr. Alan Grant,
Professor of Dinosaur Paleontology
Subject: Jurassic Park Site B, Isla Sorna

•

Testifying witness: Eric Kirby, age 13,
of Enid, Oklahoma, U.S.A.
Subject: The boy's survival for 8 weeks alone on Isla Sorna

•

Proposal:
Adoption by the United Nations of the following:

- Establishment of Bureau of Ancient Animal Affairs
- Creation of Site B Ranger's Station for the study and preservation of Jurassic Park's dinosaurs
- Appointment of park ranger
- Approval of ranger's charter

Don't miss the next
JURASSIC PARK™ Adventure!

FLYERS

by Scott Ciencin

Coming March 2002

ISBN: 0-7522-1980-4

And check out these other
Jurassic Park titles now available:

Jurassic Park Adventures #1: Survivor
Jurassic Park III Junior Novelization
Jurassic Park III Movie Storybook

#2

PREY

By Scott Ciencin

AN ORIGINAL NOVEL

based on the motion picture screenplay
Jurassic Park III
written by Peter Buchman
and Alexander Payne & Jim Taylor
based on characters created by Michael Crichton

BOXTREE

First published 2001 in the United States by Random House, Inc., New York, and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto.

First published in Great Britain 2001 by Boxtree
an imprint of Pan Macmillan Ltd
Pan Macmillan, 20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR
Basingstoke and Oxford
Associated companies throughout the world
www.panmacmillan.com

ISBN 0 7522 1979 0

Cover montage by Peter Van Ryzin
Iguanodon illustration copyright © Robert Walters 2001

Copyright © 2001 Universal Studios Publishing Rights, a division of Universal Studios Licensing, Inc. Jurassic Park and Jurassic Park Institute are trade-marks and copyrights of Universal Studios and Amblin Entertainment, Inc.

Special thanks to Cindy Chang of Universal Studios and to Alice Alfonsi, Mike Wortzman, Arthur Bennett, Jenny Golub, and Christopher Shea of Random House for their work on this book.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher. Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Mackays of Chatham plc, Chatham, Kent

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

CHAPTER 1

New York, New York

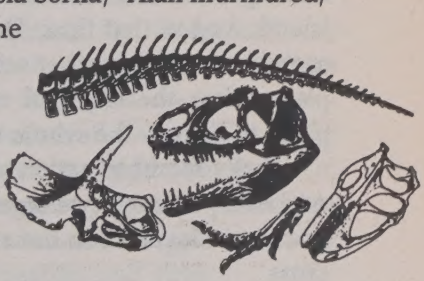
Eric Kirby stood in a narrow hallway, watching Dr. Alan Grant pace.

Eric had never been to a city this big before. As a thirteen-year-old kid born and raised in Enid, Oklahoma, he knew he should have been impressed by all the skyscrapers he'd seen and all the important people he'd met.

But he wasn't.

He'd already seen much greater wonders. Like—

"The dinosaurs of Isla Sorna," Alan murmured, rehearsing the speech he was about to give to the General Assembly of the United Nations. "They are animals. Wild animals. They are also members of endangered species."



Eric nodded encouragingly as Alan looked his way. The scientist's shoulders slumped.

"Ice water," Eric told him. "Running down your back. Just like my mom said."

"Right, yes," Alan said. He threw back his shoulders and thrust out his chest. "Better?"

"Better," Eric said.

Alan pulled uncomfortably at the collar of his navy blue suit—a suit he'd bought just for this occasion. Next door, in the great assembly room, hundreds of people could be heard settling into their seats.

"I don't know why I'm nervous," Alan said.

But Eric knew why. And it wasn't just because Alan was the kind of guy more at home on a hot, sweaty fossil dig than addressing a bunch of diplomats. Alan *wanted* this. He wanted it more than anything in the world.

Six weeks had passed since Alan, Eric, and Eric's parents had returned from that Jurassic Park island. And in that time, Dr. Grant had been hard at work consulting other scientists and drawing up plans. Now the day had come to propose those plans to *literally* the whole world.

Every member nation would be present today. And every major news organization had a reporter or camera focused on the stage Alan was about to cross.

It almost made Eric feel guilty for what he was about to do. But there was something *he* wanted, too, and only one way to get it.

"Keep going," Eric told Alan. "Keep rehearsing your speech. It'll take the edge off."

Alan nodded. "At only twenty-two square miles, this island is not set up to support its dinosaur population for long." He gestured broadly to his imaginary audience. "The amount of predators compared to prey available is a major concern. The predator population is too high, and the plant-eating populace may run out of food if conditions are not monitored."

Eric crossed his arms over his chest as Alan used a handkerchief to dab the sweat from his brow.

"Humans created these dinosaurs and their out-of-balance ecosystem. So it is humanity's responsibility to restore the balance. Otherwise, the dinosaurs of Isla Sorna face extinction."

Eric nodded. Everything Dr. Grant had said was true. They had spoken about it many times since their return from the island.

For years now, scientists all over the world had wanted to study the dinosaurs of Jurassic Park. Dr. Grant was about to suggest a way to make that happen—while at the same time suggesting a way to keep the dinosaurs healthy and alive.

"I propose that Isla Sorna be declared a wild-animal preserve and that a Bureau of Ancient Animal Affairs be created," Alan continued.

"A permanent human presence should be established on the island to study and preserve the dinosaur population.

"Furthermore, a park ranger should be appointed to protect the dinosaurs from threats stemming not only from without, such as illegal human interference, but also from within. These internal threats include, for example, dinosaur starvation; the inability of dinosaurs to nurture their young due to the physical limitations of their environment; and individual species hunted to extinction by other dinosaurs, due to the out-of-balance predator-to-prey ratio."

"You know who they'll pick for park ranger, don't you?" Eric teased.

"Please," Alan said with a somewhat desperate laugh. "I'm already nervous enough."

"Keep going, then," said Eric.

"The ranger's team would be highly trained. They would observe the island twenty-four hours a day using satellite digital and thermal imaging. And the team would be equipped to react to any threat—be it human or saurian.

"Human interference would be dealt with swiftly and efficiently by trained professionals.

Imbalances among the dinosaur population could be corrected in many ways. The ranger's team could supply alternate food sources for super-predators and giant plant-eaters. And they could help protect more vulnerable herbivores. In this way, we can protect the life cycles of these animals.

"I humbly await your response to this proposed project," Alan concluded; then his shoulders slumped again and he exhaled heavily.

Eric leaned against the wood-paneled wall. He could hear the chattering voices of the people next door.

"Not long now," Eric said.

Alan smiled, shifting his weight from one foot to another. "I suppose not."

Eric rubbed the back of his neck. He hadn't realized how tense he'd become. "So I guess I better get this over with and say what I have to say."

Alan's eyes sparkled. "Nervous, too, are you? Well, fine, if you'd like to rehearse your testimony, by all means. "

"It's not that," Eric said. "I know what I need to say. And I know how important it is that the world hear how a thirteen-year-old kid with no special weapons could survive alone on Isla Sorna for eight weeks. I know that gives you an unbeatable argument against complaints that the island is

too dangerous for scientists to work on."

"Yes," Alan said. "Your testimony is *vital* to this proposal. Until today, the UN has refused to allow any human being back into Jurassic Park. But you're a living example of what's possible."

Eric's face turned to stone, a trick he had learned from his salesman dad. "So, when you get your backing, and you will, I want you to get me back on the island. *Deal?*"

"Eric, we've *had* this discussion," Alan said. "When you're eighteen, legally an adult, we can talk about this. Your parents agree with me."

"We're not talking about my parents," Eric said. "I *have* to go back. I *have* to be a part of this, Dr. Grant. From the beginning. Now. Not five years from now. That's what's vital to *me*."

Alan furiously scratched his forehead, messing up his hair. "I sympathize, you know that, but without the blessing of your parents, it will never happen."

"What if I can get that?" Eric asked.

Alan hesitated. "You're serious, aren't you?"

"Yes. I'm making a deal. Right here. Right now. What *you* want in exchange for what *I* want."

"You mean to say, you'd walk away from here and not testify?"

Eric was silent. He honestly wasn't sure. Yes, this meant the world to him, but he knew the

dinosaurs wouldn't survive on their own.

The best Eric could do now was run a good stone-faced bluff. After all, he'd learned the art of the deal from the best—his dear old dad, king of Kirby Paint and Tile Plus back in Enid.

Suddenly, a photographer appeared at the end of the hall. "Dr. Grant! Eric! A photo?"

Alan hesitantly placed his arm around Eric's shoulder. Eric's smile was instantly in place. Beaming. The shot was taken and the photographer departed.

A woman in a dark business suit brushed past him. "We'll be ready for you two in just a minute!"

"Well?" Eric asked, the stony mask back in place.

Alan's gaze narrowed. "With conditions."

Eric could barely contain himself. "Anything."

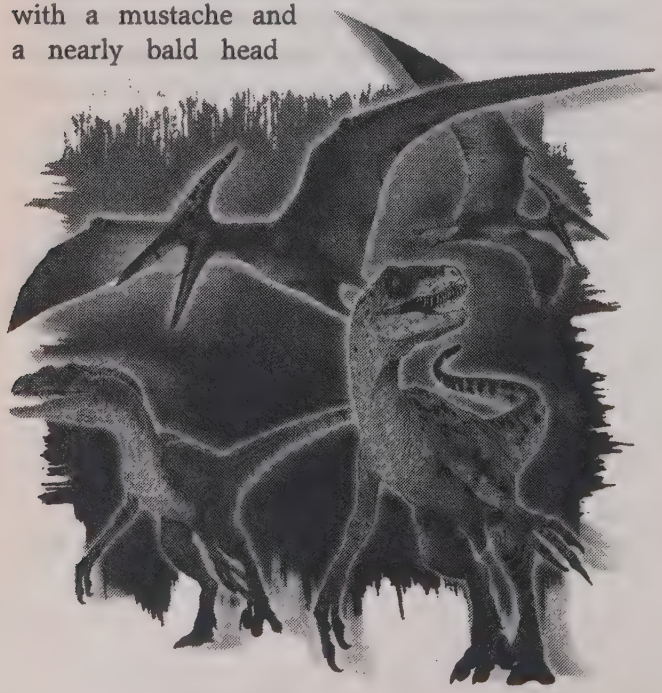
Alan smiled. "Oh, you're going to *wish* you hadn't said that."

CHAPTER 2

120 miles west of Costa Rica

"Dr. Grant?" someone called.

Alan turned from the bow of the great ship to see a short, round man with a mustache and a nearly bald head



approaching. He wore a red plaid shirt, cream-colored shorts, and a scowl—just like always. The ship rolled sharply on the high sea and the man effortlessly kept his balance by shifting his weight a little. Alan had to grab a handrail.

"Mr. Stevens," Alan said. "I've been hoping we'd get a chance to spend more time together. Ever since you agreed to take Mr. Lafferty's place as transportation chief—"

"Yeah, yeah, and it's a wonderful day in the neighborhood, whatever," Dave Stevens said.

Alan looked to Isla Sorna in the distance. There were days when the carnivores on the island seemed friendlier than certain members of his crew. But he hadn't chosen them based on personality. He had wanted the best of the best, and that's what he now had.

"Is there a problem?" Alan asked brightly.

"Depends on your definition of the word," Stevens said in his lowest growl. "During the past few weeks I've moved four boatloads of equipment to Isla Sorna. This makes number five."

"Yes," Alan said. "And?"

"We're ahead of schedule," Stevens said. "Every delivery has gone off without a hitch. All the construction and production heads are reporting green lights all the way. And everyone seems to be in a good mood. Chipper, even." His thick lips

curled up in disgust. "*Chipper.* I hate that word."

Alan was waiting for the bad news.

Stevens leaned in close. "It can't last."

With that, he turned and trundled off.

During the journey to the island, Alan had made everyone triple-check their weapons and communications devices to be sure they were in working order.

Alan's watchfulness over the past few weeks had infected his crew—which he knew was a good thing. Lowering your guard in a place like Isla Sorna, even for a moment, could get you killed. On the other hand, being too jumpy could lead to dangerous mistakes, too.

After their ship dropped anchor, a long flatbed truck loaded with supplies rolled along the newly built loading dock and settled onto Isla Sorna's rocky beach.

A number of people jumped off the truck and began to work. Their first construction job on the island—the sturdy loading dock—was already complete. Now they were building a secure road.

Trees leading from the beach would be cleared and an electrified fence erected along the way. With a safe road in place, they'd roll in construction equipment and build an enclosed base camp inside the island.

After the crew had worked for an hour or so, a young woman in sneakers, white jeans, and a red and white baseball jersey approached Alan.

"Hey, boss," she said. "Got some news."

Deborah Holland had honey-blond hair, a warm, glowing smile, and the sweetest temperament of anyone with whom Alan had ever worked. She was almost thirty, but she looked like she was still in college. Of course, not everything about her was so nonthreatening.

Strung across her back was a pair of high-intensity, long-range tasers. A sonic cannon dangled from her midsection and tranquilizer shooters hung from her waist like six-guns.

"It's a pretty day," she said pointedly.

"Yes, Deborah," Alan responded. "And?"

"Kind of a nice day for a *stroll,* don't ya think?"

As Alan's security chief, Deborah had just delivered a coded message that predators had been sighted via satellite and would be here before the workers could evacuate. She tapped her ear, where a small radio device kept her linked to Ray Dixon, the team's communications director, who was monitoring the island from the docked ship.

"Y'know, I was thinking at some point of buying a house, and there's three I really have my eye on," Deborah added.

"*Big* houses?" Alan asked. The muscles in his stomach tightened.

"Two stories each," Deborah replied. "Fortunately, I've got friends who are helping me out. Making decisions isn't always easy."

"Certainly not."

"Might be a good time for a coffee break."

"Might be."

Alan and Deborah had worked out the code in an effort to minimize any sudden attacks of panic among the workers. It was one thing to see dinosaurs from a distance, to think you can handle it. It was quite another to have them coming at you with jaws wide, saliva dripping, and claws extended.

Alan worked quickly to herd all non-defense personnel back toward the anchored ship. And by the time the first growls of the superpredators were heard, Deborah had scrambled together her team of ten.

All but Deborah and Alan wore Kevlar vests and full-body combat suits. She simply took her baseball cap from her back pocket, put it on, and adjusted it to keep the glare of the midday sun out of her eyes.

"Alan, you really don't need to be here," Deborah said with a concerned look.

"I disagree."

"Okey-doke," she said. Turning, she called to her trained team, "On the bounce, people! We're in luck, bogeys one, two, and three are staying clustered to the east, no forking maneuvers, no surprises. Just a full-on assault."

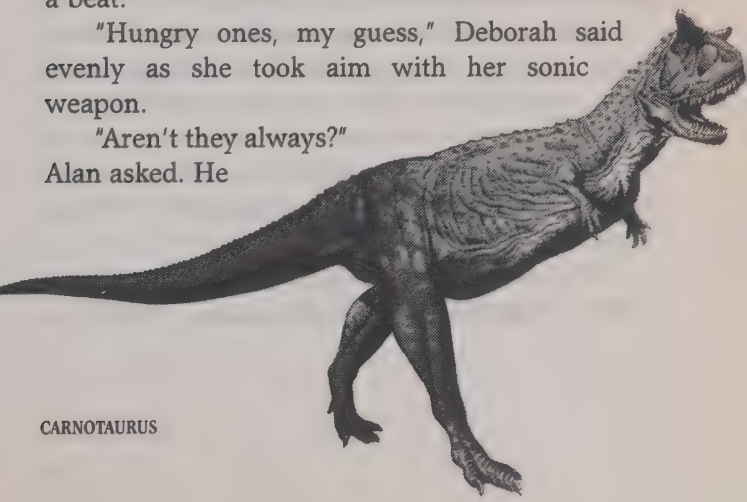
Alan glanced back. Most of the non-defense people were less than halfway down the open dock. Deborah had called it. If she hadn't set up the defense line, none of them would have gotten clear before the predators attacked.

Now the dinosaurs were coming in fast, the sun at their backs. Alan squinted to make out the details of the giant forms. They looked something like rexes, but the knobby horns over their eyes revealed their true nature.

"Carnotaurus," Alan said. He felt his heart skip a beat.

"Hungry ones, my guess," Deborah said evenly as she took aim with her sonic weapon.

"Aren't they always?" Alan asked. He



CARNOTAURUS

hoped his voice didn't betray the unstoppable waves of primal fear rising up from somewhere deep within.

"Nature of the beast," Deborah said. She armed the sonic cannon. It began to hum.

Three immense shadows moved their way, blocking the sun. Alan steadied himself as the dinosaurs moved suddenly, darting around the humans.

"Hard targets sighted, immobilization approved!" Deborah roared. The way she held herself changed instantly. Her back straightened, her legs were firmly planted, and her gaze was laser focused. A high piercing sound like white noise filled the air and Alan clapped his hands to his ears.

The dinosaurs slowed and stumbled, roaring and reaching out with their sharp claws.

Alan had seen Deborah and her team test the sonic weaponry on large animals in Africa, then rexes on Isla Sorna. He knew the sound from the weapons would not hurt the dinosaurs, but it would effectively disturb their equilibrium, making it hard for them to keep on their feet without toppling.

The pack leader, a slightly larger Carnotaurus with a crimson back, thundered ahead. While the

members of Deborah's team kept the other dinosaurs at bay with the sound weapons, Deborah herself had switched to her taser. The lead Carnotaurus came within yards of Deborah and Alan, then leaped back with a shrill cry as the lightning crackle of the taser struck it. The shock sent the dinosaur stumbling back, but while its companions fled, it would not leave.

"Big Red's not gonna back down without a fight," Deborah said. "Take one of the grenades and give him something to think about."

Grenades? Alan thought. Then he saw the little pouch at the small of Deborah's back. It looked like a purse. He opened the Velcro tab and pulled out the first of three specially made anti-dino grenades.

"Concussion bombs. You've been trained," Deborah reminded him.

Alan nodded. He stepped back as the dinosaur lurched forward—then he clicked the red button on the grenade and tossed it at the dinosaur's feet.

A wave of force erupted and blew the animal back. The Carnotaurus fell, uninjured but highly startled. It rolled over, shook its head, and began to rise.

With a low growl, Big Red fixed its gaze

on Alan. It studied him, then looked around to see that its companions had retreated to a safe distance.

Without shifting its steady gaze, the red-backed Carnotaurus rose and retreated. Then it lumbered off to join its comrades. One of them tried to take the lead as they stumbled down the beach. Big Red bit it on the shoulder and took its place as leader. Then it took one last look at Alan and slipped into the jungle.

"Okay," Deborah said. "That went well. Want to give the order for everyone to get back to work?"

"Yes—yes, of course," Alan said. He was shaken. Deborah was not. Of course, she was also a former marine and the daughter and granddaughter of two men who'd spent their lives setting up security at the largest big-game parks and zoos in the world. She'd literally grown up to the ear-splitting roars of ferocious man-eaters. It was no wonder nothing on Isla Sorna appeared to rattle her.

Alan picked up his radio, contacted the ship, and gave the order for the crew to return to work. As they retook the beach, Alan noticed Stevens watching him. The portly, balding man had his arms crossed over his chest. And he was smirking.

"Looks like you made another friend," Stevens

said. He curled his fingers and put his arms to his chest, dinosaur-style. "Grrr! Arggh!"

Deborah passed near him, holding what looked like a cassette player. Suddenly, a deafening growl sounded as she passed behind Stevens. He leaped forward, trembling and grabbing the sand.

"Sorry about that," Deborah said as she turned off the tape. "Ambient sounds to confuse predators."

Stevens dusted himself off, grunted, and stormed away. Deborah shrugged and winked at Alan, who just knew it was going to be one of those days.

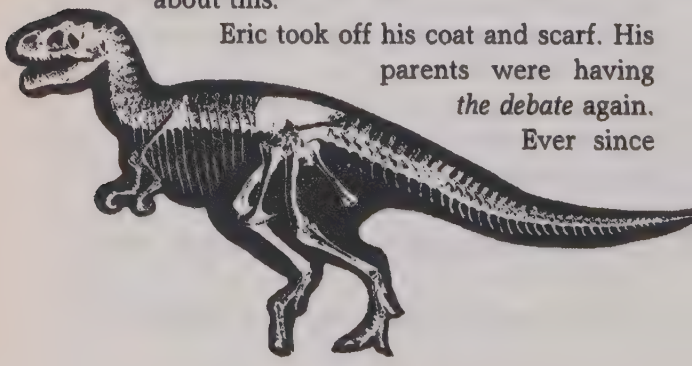
CHAPTER 3

Enid, Oklahoma

Eric arrived home from school, tracking snow onto the living room carpet. He heard raised voices from the kitchen and stole closer to listen to his parents.

"You know I'm not a big fan of this idea either, but there's something in his eyes, Paul, something different about him," Amanda Kirby said.

"No," Paul replied. "There is no force on earth or in heaven that could make me change my mind about this."



Eric took off his coat and scarf. His parents were having *the debate* again. Ever since

he had returned from New York four months ago and told them about the deal he'd made with Dr. Grant, they'd been having this talk.

"You know what happened with me when I was that age," Amanda said.

"Eric's not going to run off," Paul said. "Good golly, Amanda, he's more responsible than that!"

A huge, deep silence drifted in from the kitchen.

Eric sighed.

"Eric needs this," said Amanda softly. "It's as if he never completely came back with us to Enid. It's like a part of him is still on that island. I don't know why I know. Call it a mother's instinct. As hard as it is for me to allow this, I know he needs it. He needs to go back."

"It's not safe," Paul said simply.

"I've been over all of Dr. Grant's e-mails a dozen times. I know what he's got planned for Eric, and I trust him. After all we've been through with Dr. Grant, don't you?"

Suddenly, Eric heard footsteps. He tried to duck out of the living room, but he tripped over his snow boots and fell onto the couch as his mom and dad entered the room.

"Eric!" Paul said brightly. "Hey, son. When did you get home?"

Amanda frowned. "Get over it, hon. He heard

the whole thing. I can tell from the way he's looking at us."

Eric looked away. He didn't like being the cause of his parents' arguing. They'd been getting along so well together since they'd come back from Isla Sorna. But he couldn't give up on his dream. And Dr. Grant had *promised*—

It was then that he noticed the letter his father was holding. It was on Dr. Grant's stationery.

"It's time, isn't it?" Eric asked. His voice was low and hopeful. "He's written you that I could come to the island."

Paul nodded slowly.

Eric wanted to shout. *Finally!* Almost four months of waiting and the day was here at last! On the other hand, Dr. Grant said there would be *conditions* to his visit. Getting his parents to agree was the first.

"What Mom was talking about, she was right," Eric said quickly. "I did leave something there. Or at least that's what it feels like, you know? I mean, I don't know if going to the island will help me get it back, but . . ."

Eric shrugged. He didn't know what else to say. He only felt what he felt.

When he'd first come back home to Enid from the Jurassic Park island, nothing had seemed the same. But back then he'd barely had time to think

about it. Dr. Grant had called within two weeks, asking for his help in drawing up his big plan for the island; four weeks after that Eric was on a plane for New York City to testify to the United Nations and the whole world. That led to his writing the instant book *Survivor,* about how he'd survived alone on the island, which led to a whirlwind publicity tour with all kinds of personal appearances and television interviews.

During all those months, Eric hadn't had much time to consider how he felt. And now that all the craziness was over, everyone was telling him he should just settle into a normal life.

Normal.

Yeah, right.

After all he'd been through, Eric didn't even *know* what normal felt like anymore. His home in Enid seemed strange to him. His friends treated him differently. Everything seemed too quiet, too safe. He felt awkward, restless, like he didn't belong.

Eric dared not tell his parents but when he closed his eyes at night, he could still smell the island, still feel it, taste it. He'd become a part of it, living there the way he had.

All he knew now was that he *had* to get back there. He wasn't even sure why. He just had to.

Paul put his hand on his son's shoulder. "If we

said 'yes,' you would be careful. Right?"

"I promise," Eric said. He looked up into his father's concerned eyes. "I would be careful."

Paul's shoulders lowered. Just a little. "Then I guess we've got some plane tickets to book."

Eric celebrated Christmas with his parents, then got on a plane the next day for Costa Rica. The morning after that he was on a boat for Isla Sorna. As they neared the island, he studied the skies, looking for low-flying Pteranodons, but he saw nothing.

The boat reached the shore and moored at a long, covered dock. Eric walked the length of the dock and then along an enclosed pathway that led from the shore to the tree line. There, a huge pair of iron gates opened and a small guy with little round glasses, frizzy reddish brown hair, and a friendly, easygoing smile came to greet him. A modified Humvee waited near the gate on a road protected on either side and above by an electrified fence as far as the eye could see.

"Hey, pint-sized," the man said. He held out

his hand. "Jerry Roberts. No relation to Julia. I just cook up the grub around here."

A dinosaur roared deep in the jungle.

"No, not for *you*," Jerry called to the animal with a little laugh. "These guys. They think I'll serve them up some scientist au gratin or something!"

Eric smiled. Jerry was pretty goofy. He wore a *Lost in Space* T-shirt and patted it proudly. "This one year, I went to a comic book convention in San Diego and I rounded up autographs of the entire cast. It was so cool."

Eric smiled. "Oh."

"Hey, what do you expect from a guy who can recite all of 'Jabberwocky' from memory?" Jerry said as he opened the passenger door to the Humvee.

"The whole thing?" Eric asked as he got in.

"Don't make me prove it."

"No, it's just—"

The roar came again. Closer this time. Eric saw huge leaves moving just outside the electrified fence. A dark, enormous eye peered out from behind a mass of green scales, staring at them.

"'Beware the Jabberwock, my son!'" Jerry said as he got in. "'The jaws that bite, the claws that catch! Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun the frumious Bandersnatch!'"

The dinosaur moved off. Eric caught only glimpses as it disappeared into the jungle.

"Works every time," Jerry said.

"Only if you've got a vorpal sword," Eric said. He recalled the silly verses from his childhood.

Jerry smiled. "You and me, we're gonna get along just *fine*."

Eric had read Alan's e-mails about the construction of the human habitat. The first crews leveled trees to create a fairly smooth road that ran from the beach to the base camp inside the island. Electrified fences ran the entire route, keeping the road safe from either side and above.

There wasn't much to see during the long careful drive inland. Eric thought he spotted the bobbing head of a longneck in the distance, but he couldn't say for sure.

Soon, they passed through a second set of gates and Eric had his first look at Dr. Grant's little kingdom.

Construction vehicles and equipment were everywhere, along with Porta-Potties and various work tents.

When it was finished, the compound would consist of three large dome-shaped buildings. So far, one was complete, another partially done, and a third not much more than a skeletal structure. To Eric, they looked like giant golf balls that had

dropped here and sunk halfway into the earth.

Tunnels were being constructed to connect the three main buildings and it looked as if several more conventional-style rectangular buildings were also being put up. The entire area was enclosed by a wire mesh fence with little gates leading to the jungle.

It seemed to Eric that this place was shaping up to be a giant zoo—with the *humans* the ones who had to live in the cages. Quite a difference from how he'd survived here.

Jerry pulled up to the main building and stopped before a reinforced door. Eric got out with him and Jerry pointed to a shiny metal plate next to the door.

"Check it out," Jerry said. "You're expected."

Eric reached for the plate, his fingers splayed, his palm facing the metal. It was cool to the touch. He felt a tingling, then heard a series of tumblers fall and saw the door pop open.

"Welcome," Jerry said with a giant grin. "Welcome to the Jurassic Park Ranger's Station and the very first field office of the UN's Bureau of Ancient Animal Affairs."

The corridors inside the habitat were pure white, the carpets gray. Pictures of dinosaurs hung on the wall along with framed news clippings. Eric saw his own face in one of the newspaper articles.

He paused and looked at the familiar photo of himself and Dr. Grant on the day they had testified at the UN. Eric felt a pang of guilt over the way he'd blackmailed Dr. Grant. But then he quickly looked away.

"So have you been out in the jungle at all?" Eric asked.

"Nope," Jerry said. "I'm just the cook."

He led Eric through a reception area filled with unopened boxes, then hurried him through several research labs that were in complete disarray. Electrical plugs dangled over tables, computer screens were blank, machines were in pieces with instruction manuals strewn everywhere.

Finally, they came to a large communications room. Big dark screens hung everywhere, and there was a wide window looking out on the jungle through the wire mesh.

Dr. Grant was there, along with a young woman in a baseball jersey and jeans.

"Let's see now, introductions . . . that mean old man you know," Jerry said, nodding at Alan. "And this is Deborah Holland, security chief."

Deborah was munching on an apple. "Hiya," she said, her mouth full. She laughed as she took Eric's hand. Her grip was surprisingly strong. She swallowed. "Heard a lot about you, Eric. It's a pleasure."

"Deborah's never met a dino lover she didn't like," Jerry said.

"There's Stevens," she reminded him.

"He's not a dino lover," Jerry said. "Later, guys! I've got a soufflé begging for attention."

Alan grunted. He didn't even look up from the report he was studying.

Jerry put his hands to his chest and left the room doing a raptor imitation, complete with sharp, bobbing head movements.

"I saw that," Alan said.

"Don't you just love this guy?" Jerry asked from the hall. "And he gets better with age!"

Alan frowned. "And I heard that!"

"I think you were meant to," Deborah said.

"Hey, what do you want, I'm just the cook!" Jerry called. "Gotta spice things up somehow!"

Eric heard a door close and Jerry was gone.

"Just the cook," Deborah said. "He uses that line a lot."

"So?" Eric said. "Isn't he?"

"He's one of the finest chefs in the world," Deborah explained. "He's refined the menus of some of the best restaurants in Europe, the U.S., you name it. He's as in-demand as they come. Rich, too."

"So why's he *here*?" Eric asked.

"The same reason all of us are here," she said.

"The dinosaurs. The challenge."

"Have you been out in the jungle on a lot of field studies?" Eric asked. "Are there any planned today?"

Deborah hesitated. "You have to talk to the main man for that. Why don't I let the two of you talk."

She smiled and hurried out the way Jerry had gone.

Finally, Alan looked at him. "Mr. Kirby. Welcome to my Park Ranger's Station. Make yourself at home."

Eric looked around. The place looked nothing like he had expected. Where were all the technicians? Who was doing the field work? Why were so many things still in boxes?

He took it all in at once—and realized he'd been conned.

"There's no one here!" Eric said.

"I wouldn't call four of my crew chiefs, my head chef, and two security team members no one," Alan said.

"You know what I mean," Eric said. "You're shut down! There aren't any field studies in progress. No trips to the jungle. Nothing's happening with the dinosaurs!"

"Why—yes," Alan said. He smiled so broadly that he was positively beaming with triumph.

"That's correct. It is Christmas break, after all. People want to visit their families."

"This isn't fair!" Eric said. He pointed to the window and the vast jungle beyond. "I wanted—"

"It appears that what you *wanted* and what you *bargained for* are two different things," Alan said. "I know for a fact that I've honored my end of our *deal.*"

"But—"

"I said there would be conditions. First and foremost, you had to get your parents' permission. Somehow, you managed that. But I also negotiated that your visit would be at a time of my choosing, that you would obey my rules and follow my orders, and that this would be a single visit."

"There's no one here," Eric said. "Nothing's going on."

"There are satellite images of the island to view in our communications center, droppings samples to analyze in our lab—"

"Droppings samples!"

"Research data to read, and the Internet is running if you want to chat with your friends back home," Alan concluded. "I'd hardly call that nothing."

"You *knew* what I wanted," Eric said. "To go back into the jungle. To be part of your team. You *tricked* me."

Alan hesitated. The smile left his face. "I acted as fairly as you did that day at the UN."

Eric's eyes narrowed with fury. But—what could he do?

"Don't blame the genie if your wish wasn't specific enough, young Aladdin," Alan said. "There's plenty here for you to learn about. It just doesn't include living, breathing dinosaurs."

Eric glared at the scientist.

Alan's smile returned. "Unless you count *me,* that is."

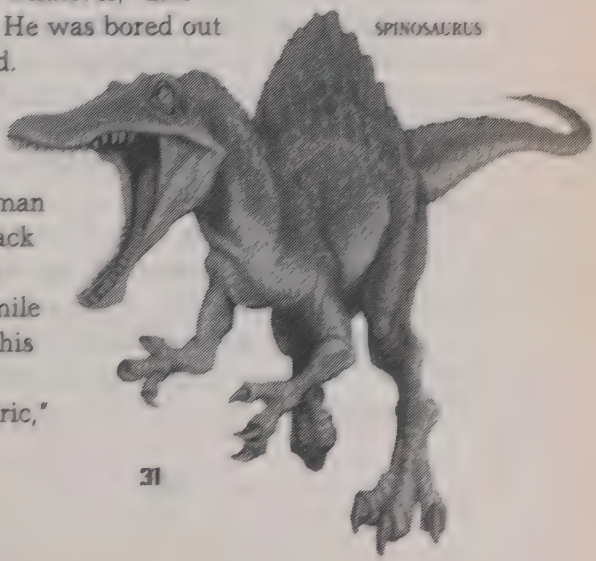
CHAPTER 4

For two days, Eric moped around the Ranger's Station, feeling perfectly miserable and not caring who knew about it. On his third day, he wandered to a computer terminal and read a little note that had been pasted to the screen.

It read: "There is no value in life except what you choose to place upon it and no happiness in any place except what you bring to it yourself."

"Yeah, whatever," Eric grumbled. He was bored out of his mind. He turned and jumped as a large man with jet-black hair and a pleasant smile nodded in his direction.

"Hi, Eric,"



SPINOSAURUS

Dan Caulfield said. He was a little over five feet tall, with swarthy skin and a round body. He wore jeans and a loose-fitting gray sweatshirt that read *Johns Hopkins Medical School Polo Team.* His eyes were dark but gentle, his smile a brilliant white. Eric guessed that he was Polynesian, but didn't know for sure.

"Sorry," Eric said, studying his shoes. "Shouldn't be messing with your stuff."

"That's okay," Dan said. "I know what it's like to be bored. 'Course, for me, that's kind of a good thing. I'm the station's medical director. Someone gets a rash, a muscle strain working out, a case of the sniffles—whole lot better than setting up a triage for dinosaur wounds."

"Sure," Eric said. He was only half listening.

"What's going to be interesting is when we start getting DNA samples from every species on the island," Dan said. "Some of the dinosaurs seem to be resistant to diseases. Unlock the secret of that immunity factor, maybe we can save a whole lot of lives."

Eric brightened. "You mean head into the field, getting blood samples from the Spinosaurus and the rex and the raptors?"

"Um-hmm," Dan said. He looked at a note on his desk. "We should be set up for that in about three months."

"Oh," Eric said. His shoulders slumped. "I'll be gone by then."

"Sure," Dan said. "We're all busy guys."

Ten minutes later, Eric was sitting on the couch in the rec room, watching TV. AMC was running one of the classic versions of *A Christmas Carol* for the hundredth time. It sure didn't feel like the holidays.

"Bah," Eric said. "Humbug."

Half the couch sank down as Stevens sat next to Eric. "Couldn't have said it better myself. Whatcha watching?"

Eric opened his mouth but didn't get a chance to speak.

"Oh, Scrooge or whatever," Stevens said. "Yeah. Didn't buy the ending. Not for a second. This guy should've been like, weird dream, man, and got back to business."

Ray Dixon, Alan's thin, bearded communications director, suddenly spoke up from behind them. "Hey, Stevens, you know those little dinosaurs, the ones that keep burrowing under the fence?"

"The chicken dinosaurs?" Stevens asked.

"Compsognathus," said Ray. "Wouldn't hurt you to crack one of these hundred dinosaur books around here sometime, you know."

"Just spit it out, will ya," grumbled Stevens.

"Saw a couple of 'em heading into the shed where you've got the spare tires and stuff," Ray said. "I dunno, they just have a thing for rubber. Pokin' one hole after another."

"That's it," Stevens said as he balled his hands into fists and got off the couch. "You tell Cookie or whatever his stupid name is that I'm bringing him fixings for chicken dinosaur soup tonight!"

Stevens stalked out of the room. Ray looked down at Eric and smiled.

"How'd you do it?" Eric asked.

"Penknife," Ray said, taking Stevens's place on the couch. "No big deal. It's the same four tires. We pop 'em, Stevens patches 'em. Then he's off trying to figure where they dug in from under the fence."

Eric was surprised at the childishness of the prank. "You that bored around here?"

Ray shrugged. "The man's got a rotten attitude. Take that Scrooge remark."

"But he's right," Eric said. "People *don't* change. Look at Dr. Grant."

"What? *Alan?*" Ray asked. "He just wants to protect you."

"I don't want anyone protecting me," Eric said.

"Yeah," Ray said. "I wanted that at your age, too. Big difference between what you want and what you need."

"Whatever," Eric said.

After the movie was over, Eric was fast asleep, and Ray went back to his shift in the communications center.

Deborah woke Eric at dinnertime, bringing him Jerry's latest culinary offering: Cajun shrimp and scallops. They played cards until nine, then watched an action movie together.

Midway through, a sound made Deborah tense. She muted the volume on the TV and listened closely.

Alan came rushing in.

"What is that noise?" Alan asked. "Is that a plane? It *can't* be a plane."

"It's a plane," Deborah said. "Flying low over restricted airspace. Not good."

Ray's voice came booming over the room-to-room intercom. "Communications, everyone, stat! We have a situation!"

Eric raced with Alan and Deborah to the communications center. Ray had a couple of laptops and one of the larger screens working.

"I've been signaling them since their approach," Ray said. "No reply."

"Could be they're in trouble," Eric said.

"Could be *we'll* handle it," Alan told Eric. He nodded to Ray. "You think they're in trouble?"

"No distress call, but if their equipment's out,

if they're flying blind and can't call for help . . ." Ray shrugged. "Anything's possible."

Alan pointed at a pair of blips on one of the computer screens. "What are those?"

"Parachutists," Ray said. "Gotta be."

Eric watched as three more blips appeared. "They're bailing!"

"For one reason or another," Alan said darkly.

"I'm getting a fix on where they're heading," Ray said. "Satellite thermals have been spotty last couple of days with all the cloud cover. I think there's some software glitch, too."

"Meaning?" Alan asked.

Ray tossed his hands in the air. "Meaning I can see where they're heading at the moment, but they're about to fall off my radar. I won't be able to track them once they land."

"I'll get our gear," Deborah said. Her soft features had gone hard in an instant.

"No," Alan said.

Deborah's brow furrowed. "No? We have R & R protocols to consider."

Eric had read about this. Rescue and Retrieval operations. It was part of the park ranger's charter.

"Not when we're down to a skeleton crew," Alan said. "We can't just go after them. We're not fully operational. We're understaffed."

"You want to *leave* them out there?" Deborah asked.

Alan turned to his communications director. "Any word on how long it'll take to bring a full crew in?"

Ray nodded grimly. He tapped a small earplug. "Stevens says by first light. No sooner."

"We have to go," Deborah said.

"Five of them, six of us," Alan said. "No air support, satellite's malfunctioning—"

"I think it's overloaded," Ray said. "All the holiday broadcasts and worldwide coverage, New Year's countdown and such."

"They'll die out there," Deborah said.

"I just need a minute to think," Alan said. He ran his hand through his hair. "Just let me think."

With everyone's eyes glued to the screen, no one noticed Eric backing away and slipping out the door.

"Stupid fools," Alan murmured as he watched the little blips fall off the radar screen.

"Who are you talking about?" Deborah asked.

"All of them," Alan said. "Every last one of them." He had no idea what to do. He had made tough choices before, life-and-death decisions, but this was different: He was protected and safe. The intruders were not. And all but two members of

Deborah's team had left the island. Could a crew so small manage this?

"People!" Stevens called as he entered the room. "It's worse than you think."

"With you, it always is," Alan muttered.

Stevens put up his pudgy hands. "Nope, nope, sorry. Can't take credit for this."

"What is it?" Alan demanded.

"The hamster's out of his cage," Stevens said.

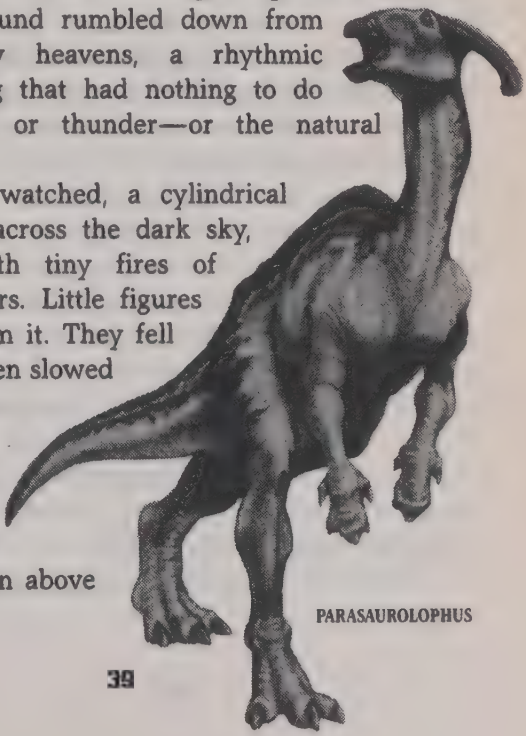
Alan simply stared at him.

"The kid," Stevens said. "Eric. He's gone. He figured out how to shut down security long enough to get through the gates." Stevens pointed to the window and the vast jungle beyond. "He's somewhere out there. . . ."

CHAPTER 5

Deep in the forest of Isla Sorna, a green- and blue-scaled Parasaurolophus jerked its head upward in alarm. It studied the night sky as a strange sound rumbled down from the starry heavens, a rhythmic thrumming that had nothing to do with rain or thunder—or the natural world.

As it watched, a cylindrical form cut across the dark sky, dotted with tiny fires of many colors. Little figures leaped from it. They fell quickly, then slowed and gently descended as what looked like wings spread open above them.



PARASAUROLOPHUS

The Parasaurolophus used its long, hollow, backward-pointing horn crest to cry out in alarm. Turning, it raced away from the rapidly descending figures in absolute terror.

Simon Tunney, the leader of the insertion team, made a perfect landing. He rolled and quickly gathered up his parachute. Using his night vision visor, he scanned the dark clearing.

No hostile life. All was going according to plan.

Simon's teammates were dressed in black like him, but the way each landed made it easy to tell them apart. Chris, his second-in-command, settled lightly on the ground, almost perfectly, while two of the others, Matt and D.J., landed in the trees, and a third slammed the ground hard and rolled around groaning.

Simon sighed and pulled off his visor and black mask. He ran his hands through his thick wavy brown hair and frowned. His chiseled features caught the moonlight as clouds parted high above.

He was only eighteen, but he presented the image of a seasoned military professional—back rigid, legs apart, fists on his hips.

"Chris, see if that hard landing knocked some

sense into Biggs or if he banged himself up too badly," Simon commanded.

"Man, it *smells* here," Biggs said, struggling to his feet. "What does Isla Sorna mean? Island of Lost Poop or something?"

Simon's younger brother, Chris, took off his visor and mask. "We did it, Simon. We're here!"

Simon forced a thin smile. Chris was fourteen and easily excited. Of *course* they had pulled it off. Their mission had been carefully planned—and well paid for.

Chris went over to Biggs, a slightly overweight black-haired twelve-year-old wobbling around the clearing.

"*Welcome* to Jurassic Park!" Biggs yelled in a bad English accent, a pathetic attempt to imitate John Hammond, the man who'd originally created this island full of scientifically re-created dinosaurs.

"He's fine," Chris said as he finished checking Biggs out.

That's a matter of opinion, Simon thought. But he needed these guys.

"Let's get Matt and D.J. out of the trees," Simon said.

"Come on," Chris said, tapping Biggs's shoulder.

Suddenly, Biggs went into Charlton Heston mode. "Get yer paws off me, ya dirty stinkin' ape!"

Simon rolled his eyes at that one. Biggs's whole life was the movies. Of course, under the circumstances, that made him valuable.

Soon, they were all together in the moonlit clearing. Matt was a buzz-cut blond, a flathead fourteen-year-old jock who was good for heavy lifting and following orders. D.J. had red hair and a slight build, and he rarely spoke, but he was a good eyes-and-ears man, even at thirteen. Nothing got past him.

Simon broke out a top-of-the-line digital camera from his equipment pouch. He handed it to Biggs, the cameraman, and said, "*You* know what to do."

In seconds they were recording, the settings and lens of the expensive camera making it possible to record a great picture, even in the faint moonlight. Simon raised his chin imperiously at the lens. "My name is Simon Tunney and these are the members of my team."

He introduced them one by one for the sake of their audience. "We're about to take you on an extraordinary journey; I only hope each of us will survive."

Simon hoped he at least *sounded* sincere about that. "But you never know. We're going in search

of a legend. In search of the truth. We're out here looking for our destinies, a thing some of us might find in the belly of a beast. One way or another, you'll be coming along."

Simon nodded and Biggs cut the recording.

"So you really think we can make the kind of money those guys who made *Blair Witch* made?" Biggs said.

"More," Simon said. "That was fake. This is real."

"Well, yeah," Biggs said. "Except the getting eaten part, right?"

Simon grinned and shrugged. "We talked about this. Lex and Tim spelled it all out for us. It's in Grant's and Malcolm's books and that kid Eric Kirby's *Survivor* account. If you're smart, and you follow the rules of this place, you make it through. Get stupid, or panic, and you get eaten."

"But Lex and Tim didn't know you weren't a curious college student writing a science paper," Biggs pointed out. "They didn't know what you were planning when you talked to them."

"Duh," Chris said, catching up to his older brother. "Like we'd be here if they did."

"Let's go find some dinosaurs," Simon said, smiling down at his brother. "*Before* they find us."

Biggs paled a little, but at least he shut up—

except for one last comment. As they made their way into the forest, he just couldn't resist: "Dude, one thing. I think I lost the map."

For the next twenty minutes, Simon Tunney led his small group of parachutists through the jungle. He acted fearless. But the truth was, he was truly afraid—and that was all right with him. The fear let him know he was alive. Kept him sharp. And, more importantly, kept him from getting *bored*.

A smug, superior grin masked the exhilarating terror he felt. Behind him, Biggs obediently recorded his every move.

Unfortunately, Chris's "bud" was also *blathering*.

"Here we are, folks!" Biggs chattered. "Isla Sorna, your home away from home, where the dinosaurs roam. Not that we have seen any yet."

"But what's *really* important is if *they've* seen *us*," Simon said.

Biggs got quiet for a while after that. He swung the camera in every direction at the slightest noise. Then he calmed down and went into interview mode again.

"So, Simon," Biggs said in his best TV announcer voice. "Tell us all about your reasons for doing this."

Simon kept walking, but he made sure his best

side was facing the camera as he pretended to think about Biggs's question.

Why was he here? Why had he convinced his brother, Chris, and his brother's friends to get together for an adventure they'd never forget? Why had he forged a few "borrowed" checks from his parents' offshore bank accounts to pay for this little trip? Why had he *really* done it? The truth?

A part of it was the money. Simon hated living on the chump change his wealthy parents called an "allowance," using it like a string to get him to do whatever they wanted. One big score with this film should set him up for years, and he could finally tell his parents to stuff it.

But there were other reasons he was here, too. The fame, for one thing. Simon intended to be the fearless hero of this little film—something that should get him into the inner circle of every hot party in L.A., New York, London, and Tokyo for years to come. Might even land him some feature film roles. And, last but not least, was the actual *rush* of risking his and everyone else's life. Better than any drug he'd ever tried.

Of course, Simon wasn't about to go into any of that stuff with the camera around. Instead, he mentally selected one of his well-rehearsed speeches.

"My reasons for doing this?" repeated Simon.

"The cynics out there won't buy this—and I know, 'cause usually I'm one of them—but I'm doing this for the people. The average, everyday people just like us."

Simon paused for dramatic effect—and to make it look as if he hadn't spent hours making all this up. "The people have a right to know what's really going on in this place. Since Alan Grant's speech before the UN's General Assembly, there's been a news blackout for *four months*. How do we know that one of the world's governments isn't studying the dinosaurs, learning how to make new ones or find ways to use the ones already here as biogenetic weapons?"

Simon paused long enough to check out his brother's face. Chris's eyes were wide, his lips parted slightly, just as if he were watching some great movie or baseball game. As usual, he was mesmerized.

Perfect.

One thing Simon could count on was the gullibility of his younger brother and his brother's little crew. They'd follow him anywhere. Do anything he said. It had been like that for as long as Simon could remember.

They'd all grown up together in the same wealthy neighborhood. As the years went by, Chris and his friends had all become as bored as Simon

with every expensive toy their parents could buy them.

Chris, D.J., Matt, and Biggs didn't look up to Simon just because he was older. They looked up to him because he never failed to deliver what they all wanted most: *actual* adventure.

It was Simon who showed them a world of *real* risk. From hot-wiring cars for joy rides and shoplifting CDs from record stores to crashing concerts and sold-out football games, they'd pushed the limits without yet getting caught.

This trip was nothing like those little warm-ups, and they all knew it. Goodbye video game jungles and two-dimensional bad guys. So long ultra-safe gated communities. This was the pinnacle, the riskiest game of all.

"How do we know that everything that can be done, really is *being* done to keep the world safe from what's here?" Simon asked the camera. "They let three Pteranodons fly off. They've been sighted in South America and Mexico. Some even think they've seen them in the Florida Keys. Each time, people have been attacked and shown up in emergency rooms with wounds that couldn't have come from anything else except one of those blood-crazed flying reptiles."

"But that's all rumors and stuff people are saying in chat rooms," Chris said earnestly. "Like

babies being snatched from strollers. There isn't any evidence."

Simon beamed inwardly. He had been certain his brother would say something to that effect.

"Not to go all Fox Mulder on you, but evidence can be suppressed. Facts can be altered. The truth isn't out there," Simon said with a broad sweep of his arm. "It's here."

Biggs did a wide pan of the jungle, then turned off the digital recorder.

"Great sound bite," Biggs said. "Man, is this going to sell. I bet one of the big three TV networks is going to make a bid. Then there's home vid and foreign, residuals. . . ."

Trailing behind Simon, D.J. said, "I thought I heard something."

They all fell silent. Biggs wildly whipped the camera in every direction.

"Okay, here we go," Simon said.

They had been walking on a trail that appeared to have been made by some superpredator. Trees had been shattered like toothpicks. Heavy branches had been kicked out of the way. And there were footprints as big and deep as potholes.

Simon slid his goggles back on and switched from night vision to heat sensing. The tiny red light on his visor turned orange. "Something's coming," Simon said. "Something *big*."

They heard it then and felt it—heavy thumps and trembling upon the hard earth. Biggs looked pale, and his hands started shaking. Taking hold of the camera with one hand, he pointed it toward a field of grass tall enough to hide any of them.

"That way looks good!" Biggs said.

"No," Simon said. "We talked about this. We'll be fine as long as we follow the rules."

"Biggs is right," said Matt, who was lugging all of their heavy equipment and supplies. The blockhead was getting jittery. "We've gotta take cover."

"We have to get out of harm's way," Simon said. "That doesn't necessarily mean taking cover."

He pointed upward toward the tall branches of a nearby tree. "Up there is the safest spot, and we won't miss anything."

Chris nodded in agreement. "Let's go. No more talk."

Chris started to climb the closest tree. The others followed him without another word. Simon was the last to scale the tree. He wanted to make sure Biggs shot him as he dramatically made his way up toward the camera.

Soon, they were all crouching in heavy branches, staring down. The branches shook, the leaves trembled—and the dinosaur came closer.

"I was getting worried," Biggs said. He was shaking even worse now. "All this jungle stuff,

it could have been anywhere. Without some dino-action—"

Biggs fell silent as the dinosaur stepped into a pool of moonlight. The camera sagged and Simon had to nudge Biggs to take proper aim again.

"It's a veggiesaur," Simon whispered. "A duck-bill. But it can still be dangerous if we upset it."

The dinosaur walked upright, like a T. rex, but it had longer arms and big flat hands. The animal's head was flat and long, horselike, and its neck was short compared to its very long trunk and tail. The dinosaur was over forty feet long and at least fifteen feet high. If it came close enough, it would be able to swivel its head and look right at the humans in the tree.

And, actually, it *did* look as if it was searching for something.

"Oh, I think I'm gonna be sick . . . ," Biggs whimpered. "It's gonna change its diet. I know it."

Simon placed his hand on Biggs's back. "They can't do that. Just hold it steady and get the shot."

He felt Biggs's body relax.

"Shaky cam is in," Biggs whispered.

Chris shushed them both.

The dinosaur stopped. It looked around, sniffed, sneezed—then turned and went back the way it had come.

No one spoke until it was totally out of view.

"That was a dinosaur," Matt said. "Oh, man, oh, man, that was an actual dinosaur! Oh, man. . . ."

"Get me in the shot," Simon commanded.

Biggs swung the camera his way.

"We just had our first encounter with a dinosaur," Simon said. "An Edmontosaurus, I believe. But just because it was a plant-eater doesn't mean we weren't in real danger. One sweep of its tail and it could have knocked all of us from our perches, breaking our necks in the fall. Panicked, it could have trampled those who survived. *Caution* is the watchword. But *luck* plays into it. A T. rex can scent for miles. If it had been one of those, just being out of its field of vision wouldn't have saved us."

He nodded toward Matt. "Fortunately . . ."

Biggs swiveled the camera to get Matt in the frame.

"We came prepared," Matt said as he tapped two of the heavy bags that he was carrying.

"Incoming," D.J. said.

Another dinosaur appeared. It had the same distinctive horsey-face as the first duckbill but was about a third the size. It entered the clearing from another direction. Cooing, it sniffed the air, and looked around in confusion.

"Tell me you're getting this," Simon said.

Biggs zoomed in, "Oh, yeah."

The smaller dinosaur wandered to the base of the tree where all five of the infiltrators were hiding. It munched on a few low-lying plants, then ambled into the field of grass.

"Told you it was safe that way," Biggs said. "The veggiesaurs weren't dumb."

It's not a matter of being dumb, Simon thought. It was all up to luck or who had the advantage.

"Follow him," Simon said.

Biggs panned and followed the dinosaur as he went deeper and deeper through the field of grass.

"I don't know," Biggs said. "I think that was his mom or dad before. Maybe we should try to help them get back together. He looks lost."

Simon ignored Biggs. He turned to his brother and pointed at the high grass. "Any of this looking familiar?"

"Lost World," Chris said. "Malcolm's book."

Thin lines of terrifyingly swift motion appeared deep in the field of grass from every direction. They converged on the little plant-eater, who shrieked and suddenly was yanked down into the grass. There was a great thrashing, a series of yips and howls, then silence.

"Raptors," Simon said, his heart thundering.

"Let's go while they're . . . otherwise engaged."

Soon, they were back on the ground.

"Remember, the best weapon we have," Simon said as he tapped the side of his head. "Our intelligence. That gives us the ability to learn from the mistakes of others."

He saw Chris shudder as he stared into the tall grass. It was stained dark red in spots.

The crimson looked black in the moonlight.

"I want a shot of me with *that* in the background," Simon commanded. Biggs swung the camera to capture Simon and the stained grass.

"So far, it looks like the dinosaurs are roaming free," Simon said. "Does that mean they're free to escape? Free to swim to some freighter? Free to murder the crew and drift to a populated area? What do you suppose the next boat to a Florida port is really going to have on it?"

He drew his finger across his throat. Biggs stopped shooting.

"Time to get moving," Simon said.

They walked deeper into the jungle, away from the tall grass. Chris turned to his brother and whispered, "You really think things are that out of control?"

No, Simon thought. *I'm in total control.*

"Anything's possible," Simon said. "We're

here to find the truth, right?"

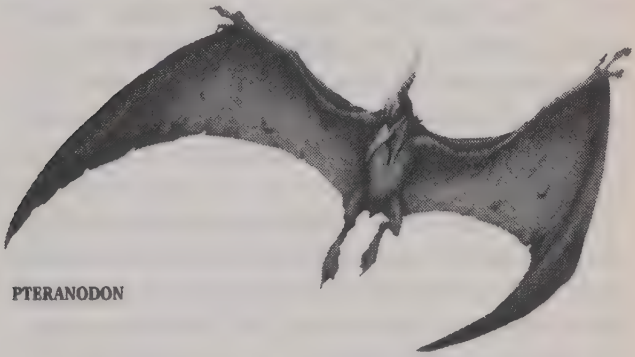
"Right," Chris said. He had a serious look about him.

"Good man," Simon said. He gripped his younger brother's shoulder. "Proud of you."

Chris's face lit up. Simon turned from him and led the group to a new trail.

CHAPTER 6

Eric Kirby was on the move. He felt kind of vulnerable not having an armor vest, or even the camouflage cape of vines and leaves he'd worn for those eight weeks he'd been here before, but he had other stuff now to make up for it.



PTERANODON

He'd snatched a couple of stun grenades, a flare gun, a stunner, and some candy bars from the station's storage room. And now he was running hard, with a pretty good idea of the shortest and most direct path to take to reach the parachutists.

But—paths through this jungle often changed. He needed a nice, high vantage, so he went to the base of Mount Hood. It was a rise overlooking a valley. He would have to pass through that valley to meet up with the parachutists and lead them to safety.

Eric was still fuming about Dr. Grant. He knew the man was going to let the parachutists stay outside until morning. He just *knew* it. And Eric refused to abide by a decision like that.

As he climbed, he pictured them, wounded and alone. He knew they needed help. *His* help. Their plane must have been out of control, about to crash. Why else would they have jumped here? No one sane would have done it on purpose.

The moonlight was silvery in the clear, starry sky. The night air was damp, pungent and . . . *familiar.*

His mother and father would never understand—but after days caged up in that secure compound, and *months* caged up in a safe, suburban life—the dangerous scent of Isla Sorna almost felt like coming home again.

While he rested midway up Mount Hood, Eric bandaged a few brush cuts on his arms and hands with strips from his T-shirt. The last thing he wanted was his blood scent attracting predators. There was a stream on the side of the earthy rise

and he used it to create mud to cake over the bandages and mask the scent. He would have preferred dino dung, but he hadn't come across any piles of it yet. In a way that was good; no dung, no dinos.

Still, he had to take every precaution he could. He'd made his father a promise to be careful, and he intended to keep that promise.

He just hoped his parents would understand why he'd bolted from the compound. He couldn't let the parachutists stay out here until Dr. Grant's reinforcements arrived. He couldn't let them be *abandoned,* the way he'd been. He had to save them.

Eric climbed the craggy wall leading up to the top of Mount Hood. As he ascended, he took extra care to check roots, vines, rocks, and fissures to ensure they could hold his weight. He worked up a sweat despite the slight chill in the air.

Man, the chill felt good. As good as the soft jungle floor beneath his feet, the exhilaration from the run, and that familiar rush of adrenaline.

Eric soon reached the plateau. He hauled himself over the top, then checked for any signs of predators. Once he felt safe, he studied the moonlit valley. As he had guessed, three of the routes he would have taken were blocked.

A rock slide had filled in one of them. The second route was blocked by a mass of twisted,

shattered branches. The third path was occupied by a pair of hulking superpredators.

Eric couldn't tell what kind of dinosaurs they were from this distance, but the speed with which they moved, and the way they darted back and forth, their heads low and searching for prey, made him certain they weren't hunting for a nice house salad. So he would have to find another way to reach the group—provided they hadn't wandered too far from their landing site. Because if that had happened . . .

Eric didn't want to think about that possibility.

He was so intent on studying the valley below, trying to find the best way to the clearing where the parachutists had landed, he almost missed the faint *scritch-scratch* of talons on hard earth behind him. He spun—and relaxed. An exotic bird had landed behind him. A quetzal. Red-breasted, with a green head and beautiful iridescent wings. A pretty trilling escaped the bird as it cocked its head to one side and studied the human.

Eric had almost forgotten about the natural life that had existed on Isla Sorna before John Hammond turned the place into a breeding factory for genetically enhanced dinosaurs. There were spiders, snakes, sloths, and some pretty big birds. Also, beetles and bees, and scorpions and bats, and ticks and gnats and rats, and all sorts of fun little

critters to run up against on a dark night. Just what he wanted to think about—as if it wasn't already scary enough.

"Get out of here," Eric growled. When the bird didn't move, he tossed a few small stones in front of it. It fluttered its wings and took off.

A few moments later, he heard it land once more. Again, he scared it off by tossing some pebbles. He was still searching for a decent route when he heard the fluttering a third time.

Without even looking back, he picked up more rocks and chucked them over his shoulder.

CAHHHRRR!

The sound was earsplitting. It startled him so badly he nearly lost his balance and toppled off the edge of the plateau. Then Eric turned to see an inky black shape with a wingspan the size of a room stalking toward him. A Pteranodon!

The creature's pointy head and sharp beak caught the dull gray moonlight. It swept forward, launching itself into the air, its claws aimed at him.

Eric dived forward and rolled underneath the Pteranodon's grasp. He heard the great fluttering again, and looked over his shoulder to see the Pteranodon high in the air, circling back. He raced from it and threw himself over the far edge of the plateau.

CAHRRR!

One of the Pteranodon's talons ripped across his shoulder as he plummeted.

Eric tumbled end over end, striking rocks, boulders, shattered tree trunks, and hard-packed mounds of dirt. He heard the Pteranodon sailing above him.

It was waiting for him to land!

He struck a large stone set at an angle and was suddenly flung a half-dozen feet to the right. With a grunt he smashed into the hard bristles of a dying bush and rolled to a stop. He heard a thud, an angry high shriek, and the fluttering of wings.

He tried to crawl away, but the world was still spinning. Every second he lay there, helpless and out of control, he was certain would be his last. But the Pteranodon did not come for him.

Finally, he rose up and saw the Pteranodon lying stunned beside him. He realized that it had sailed in for the kill early and knocked itself senseless on the heavy stone that had tossed Eric to one side.

Eric reached for the stunner he had taken, but the Pteranodon's head was lolling. The huge flier's body relaxed as it sank back into unconsciousness.

Eric stumbled into the jungle, not quite as sure of himself as he had been before. He had thought that by returning to Isla Sorna, he could somehow

reclaim something he had lost. All he found so far was the simple truth that he could hunt all night for the people who had parachuted into this deadly place, but he *could not* consider himself a hunter.

On this island, he, and everyone who came to it, were only prey.

CHAPTER 7

"Omigosh, they're so *cute*!" Biggs said.

Simon stared at Biggs, wondering how badly he really needed the little jerk as a cameraman. They had stopped before a small group of Compsognathus. Chicken-sized dinosaurs.

Meat-eaters.

And Biggs was right up in their faces with the camera.

Simon sighed. Biggs was expendable, he supposed, but the camera was not.

"Remember Malcolm's book,"

COMPSOGNATHUS

Simon said. "That little girl got mauled by these guys—and that hunter was eaten. They're like piranha with legs."

"You wouldn't eat me, now would you?" Biggs said in what sounded ridiculously close to baby talk. "No, you would not!"

Simon looked to Chris. He gestured. Chris nodded.

"Don't get too close," Chris said. "There may be a lot more where these came from. Remember the rules."

"Gotcha," Biggs said.

Suddenly, one of the little compies leaped forward, snapping at the cameraman. Its maw tapped the camera and it fell on its butt, confused and sore.

"Great shot!" Biggs said.

"Okay, swing it around," said Simon; then he waited until Biggs had the camera on him. "More of InGen's creations on the loose. Small and seemingly harmless. But don't be fooled by looks. Lots of deadly things come in small packages. I look at creatures like this and wonder, how well do they swim? Or what if a small group of them could stow away on one of the transports going back and forth between Isla Sorna and the outside world?"

Simon paused, building dramatic effect once more. "I wonder if I might wander outside one day

and find packs of these creatures in my backyard, ready to tear me into little pieces." He turned away. "Okay, Biggs, get another shot of these guys, a wide one, and let's move."

"Wish I had some more light," Biggs said. He picked up a stick and started poking at the little dinosaurs. "And I wish these guys would *do* more!"

"Don't tease them," Simon warned. "They fight back."

"Just want to get a little action going, that's all," Biggs said. "I wouldn't hurt them."

Simon heard a rustling. Before he could say anything, Matt had dug into the supply bag and brought out a portable thousand-watt lamp.

"Got the light," Matt said.

"Hey," Simon said, raising his hand. "Wait!"

It was too late. A brilliant stream of blinding white light filled his vision, and Simon spat a curse under his breath as he turned away.

His gaze fell on the small gathering of Compsognathus. Only—it wasn't a *small* gathering anymore.

There were dozens of the little dinosaurs now. Their heads were all turned in the direction of the light. They appeared mesmerized.

"Matt, set the light down slowly, and don't let it turn off," Simon said.

As the light slowly lowered, the compies'

heads all moved to follow its motion. Simon thought it must have looked like the noonday sun to them, and the confusion this brought to the little dinosaurs might be the only thing that could save his team.

Matt set down the lamp and stepped away from it.

The compies were starting to get restless. Simon watched their little heads as they looked to one another and glanced at the prey that had come within their reach.

"Everyone back away," Simon said. He was pleased to see that Biggs was still recording, even though his chest was heaving and his round face was once again covered in sweat.

"We have to get out of here," Chris said.

The group stepped backward, moving along a trail that looked like it had been made by a super-predator on the hunt.

"No sudden movements," Simon whispered, his heart racing. "They'll rush us if we spook them. Just take it slow." He could barely contain a smile at the thrill of being this close to disaster on so many fronts.

The group was still backing up, but the compies were getting bored staring into the light. At least a dozen were hopping and springing their way.

"Oh, man," Biggs said. He tapped a button on the side of his camera and Simon heard the whir of the zoom. "This is something!"

More compies were coming their way. The sound of Biggs zooming in and out was drawing them.

"Biggs, stop the zooming," Simon warned. "You're spooking them. Just hold your shot—"

A sharp howl filled the air as Biggs tripped on a thick fallen branch. The camera rolled away, and a flood of compies rushed him.

Chris moved into action. He snatched up a rock and threw it at the light. The rock hit with the precision of his best fastball, turning the light just enough to stop many of the compies in their tracks. They wanted to see why the midnight sun had suddenly shifted.

But several small groups of the meat-eaters ignored the light. Two leaped onto Biggs and started snapping and biting at his hands and face.

Chris lobbed two more rocks, knocking them away from his friend. An image of all the baseball trophies Chris had won popped into Simon's head. Thank heaven for his little brother's talents.

"D.J., get the camera," Simon commanded.

"Matt, get Biggs!" Chris hollered.

Everyone was back on his feet, running like mad. The compies chased after them, leaping into

the trees, following along branches, jumping out at them with raking claws and snapping maws.

A compie landed on Simon's back, and he felt the sharp sting of needlelike claws sinking into his flesh.

Simon instantly slipped off his night vision goggles and rapped the little dinosaur on the head before it could take a bite out of him. The compie fell away, and Simon raced deeper into the forest with his team.

"Gone—they're gone!" Chris finally said breathlessly.

Simon stopped and looked around. His brother was right. Simon let the others catch their breath. All except Biggs. He slammed the overweight teen against a tree.

"I told you, *don't* tease them," Simon said. "If we follow the rules, we survive. If not . . ."

Simon's voice trailed off as he noticed that D.J., who now had the camera, was recording his outburst.

"Turn that off," Simon commanded.

"Why? This is the good stuff," D.J. said. "It's *real.*"

Simon let Biggs go and stepped up to D.J.

"Off. *Now.*"

D.J. lowered the camera, and Simon turned to face the group.

"We're either a team or we're not," he said. "I didn't make up the rules, and I'm not saying any of this for fun. We don't know how long we've got before Grant and the others find us. And when they do, they're going to want to shut us down and keep the truth to themselves. We've planned for that. The main thing is, we've got to stay alive, and to do that, we've got to follow the rules. Everyone with me? Or do some of you want to take your chances *on your own?*"

"I'm with you," Chris said. He took his place at his older brother's side.

Biggs was staring at Simon in awe. "You knew. I can't believe it, but you *knew* exactly what those little dinosaurs would do."

"I'm inspired," D.J. said.

Simon was pleased to see from Biggs's and Matt's expressions that they also held him fully in awe—exactly what Simon was used to.

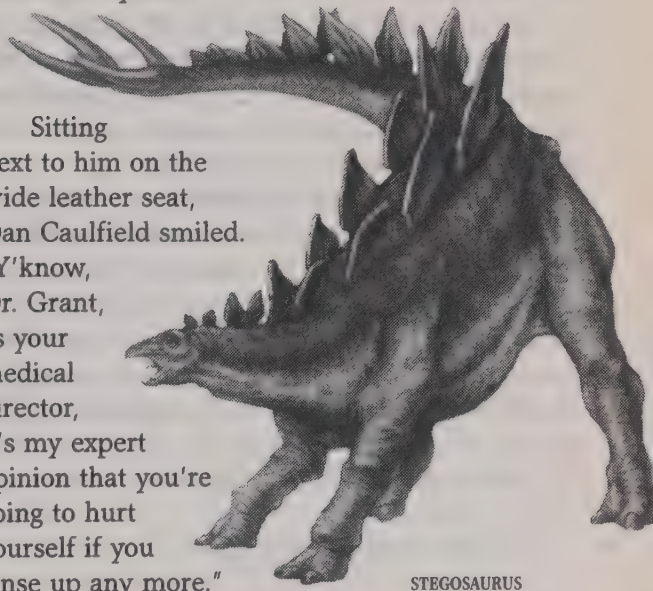
And once we're done filming here, the whole world will look at me that way, thought Simon with pleasure. *Instant star. International hero. No doubt.*

He turned and found a path through the woods. He didn't look back to see if the others were following. He knew they would.

CHAPTER 8

Alan Grant sat in the back of the fortified all-terrain vehicle, his arms crossed over his chest, his knees pressed firmly together, his gaze reduced to a narrow squint.

Sitting next to him on the wide leather seat, Dan Caulfield smiled. "Y'know, Dr. Grant, as your medical director, it's my expert opinion that you're going to hurt yourself if you tense up any more."



STEGOSAURUS

Deborah Holland sat across from Alan, and Dave Stevens was at the wheel. All four of them wore Kevlar vests and padding. Headgear was tucked into spaces beneath their seats, along with other supplies.

Another vehicle trailed behind them over the rough terrain. The two remaining members of Deborah's security team were in that one—two burly guys named Chuck and Drew.

Ray had stayed behind with the station's chef, Jerry Roberts.

As communications director, Ray had the job of watching the station's satellite screens while staying in touch with Alan's team by radio. If they were lucky, they'd get a heat signature on Eric and the trespassers and locate them that way.

Jerry Roberts had offered to come along and help, but Alan knew the man had had very little dino defense training. So Alan told him to stay at the station and have a hot meal ready for them when they returned—*if* they returned. There was always the chance they'd be the hot meal for whatever was roaming around tonight in the dark jungle.

"This shouldn't be happening," Alan said through gritted teeth.

"Agreed," Dan said mildly.

"And the boy . . ." Alan gestured wildly, trying to put his feelings into words.

"Don't sweat this stuff, boss," said Deborah. "The main thing is to stay loose. On the bounce. It's like with tai chi, where you take a step into the blow to deflect it, then use its force to your advantage, direct its energy where you need it."

"Pardon?" Alan said.

"Okay," said Deborah patiently, "I'll say it my granddad's way: Gnawing on the bone won't get you any more meat."

Alan ran his hand over his furrowed brow. "I trusted Eric to be responsible. A thirteen-year-old. What was I thinking?"

Deborah shrugged. "He *was* being responsible."

Alan sputtered and spat trying to find words of reply. Finally, he got out, "By disobeying orders, by running off—"

"He felt responsible for those people," Deborah said. "Don't you see, from his point of view, when you talked about possibly not going after them, he felt you were abandoning them, the way *he* had been abandoned on the island. So naturally he'd feel responsible for saving them."

"I was exploring all options, that's all," Alan

said. "I hadn't *decided* to abandon them—"

"But he didn't know that," Deborah said.

"Really?" Alan asked. "And how do you know what was going on in his head?"

"I've gotten to know that kid pretty well," she said. "And you know him, too, whether you admit it or not."

Alan tried to find something he could say to defend himself, to show that he wasn't being insensitive, that he had everyone's welfare at heart.

But he couldn't.

Deborah's eyebrows raised and she put two fingers to the earplug in her right ear. It was hooked into the remote communications device on her belt. "Holland here. What's up?"

Alan watched as she nodded, said "okey-doke" several times, then signed off.

"That was Ray back at the station," Deborah said evenly. "He's picked up a signal. It may just be a glitch, but—"

The vehicle lurched as Dave Stevens made a sudden turn.

"But . . . ?" Alan asked.

Deborah yanked her weapons bag out from under the seat. "But I think we should go over the proper use of each of our weapons. One more time."

Oddly enough, Deborah's words actually comforted Alan. Dinosaurs he could fight.

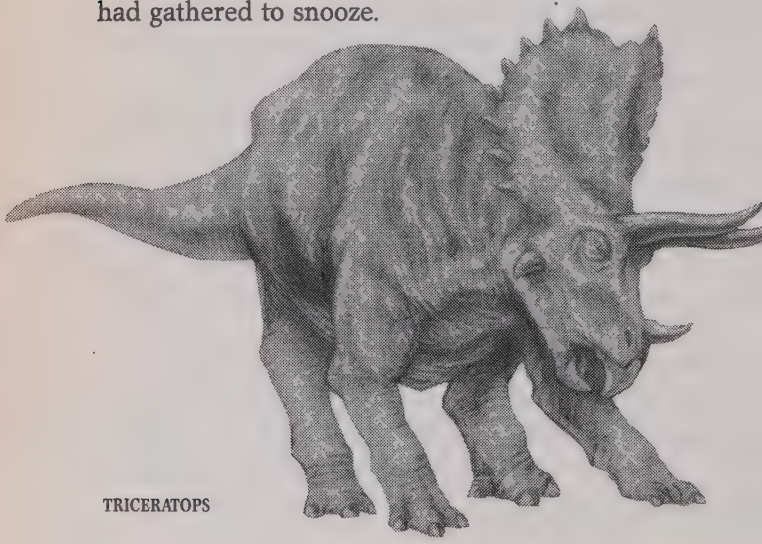
The feelings Deborah's words had set off within him, the concern that maybe she was right—

That was something else entirely.

CHAPTER 9

"Now this time, everyone remember the rules," Simon said.

He had followed a trail that his research told him had been left by plant-eaters. Soon, he and the rest of his team were hiding in the brush outside of a large pond where an entire family of Triceratops had gathered to snooze.



TRICERATOPS

The dinosaurs were magnificent. The clouds were parting above and the moonlight glistened off their horns. Their scaly hides bore large circles and blotches. Simon couldn't tell what colors they were, but the patterns marked all the dinosaurs as members of the same clan.

"Can we go over them again?" Biggs asked.

"First," Simon said very softly, "don't make a lot of noise. Second, don't sneak up on them. They get scared easy, and angry even more easily than that."

"Gotcha," Biggs said. Then he realized he had just spoken in his normal, loud voice. Simon glared, and Biggs quickly repeated the word in a whisper. "Gotcha."

"Third, and most important," Simon continued, "they've got young. If they feel we're threatening their young, we're toast."

"So what's the plan?" Chris asked.

"Watch and learn," Simon said as he stepped out from cover and slowly walked to the side of the pond the plant-eaters hadn't occupied. He didn't look in the direction of the mammoth dinosaurs. Instead, he simply sat at the edge of the pond, took off his shoes, and dipped his feet in the water. It wasn't nearly as cold as he had expected.

Slowly, the Triceratops noticed him. Simon studied them from the corner of his vision,

watching them raise their heads and nudge one another at the sight of him.

When he spoke, he made a conscious effort to keep his voice low, soft, and level.

"Biggs, are you getting this?" Simon asked. "Tell me you're getting this."

"They're coming toward you," Chris said from the brush.

"Sure," Simon said. "They're curious. The whole thing is we have to let them know that we understand that this is their home and we're just passing through."

Simon waited, forcing his body to appear relaxed as he heard the heavy thumps of the dinosaurs' footsteps. The adult Triceratops were huge—the size of tanks. And their horns reminded him of his dad's collection of short swords from ancient battles. Sharp and very lethal.

"Grrrrumpppllff?" a dinosaur grunted.

Slowly, ever so slowly, Simon turned to look into the dark eyes of the closest Triceratops. He said nothing. His expression betrayed no emotion. He simply waited, forcing down his fear.

This is not a creature from the past, he told himself. It's not a *real* dinosaur. No one took a time machine back 65 million years. This is just another big, stupid animal, just like an elephant or a rhino. It deserves caution and respect, but not fear.

He suddenly realized he was in a staring contest. Who blinks first? That would determine who had the superior—

With a roar the dinosaur thrust his head and gleaming sharp horns forward, causing Simon to yelp and throw himself into the cold pond to avoid getting gored. The Triceratops followed him into the shallow water, splashing forward with greater speed and power than Simon could have imagined. Two more adults appeared on the other bank. They looked ready to cut off any possible route of escape the human might consider.

What had gone wrong? Simon wondered. He had followed the rules. He had done *nothing* to provoke the dinosaurs. This wasn't fair!

Suddenly, Simon heard a whoop and a hollering. He recognized the voice.

"Leave him alone, you big wrinkled gasbags!" Chris hollered. "Check this!"

Simon looked back and saw his brother in the water. With his perfect arm, Chris snatched up a stone from the bank of the pond and snapped a fastball at the feet of an infant Triceratops. The little dinosaur leaped back, yelping in surprise. The adults turned on Chris with an angry growl.

The other three teens plunged into the water behind Chris. Biggs held the camera high to keep it from getting wet. Matt picked up a log and

hefted it as if he could swing it and actually damage one of these behemoths. Yeah, right.

The guy's got heart, Simon thought. *No brains, but lots of heart.*

Simon glimpsed Biggs still holding the camera. *Please, let him be getting this,* he thought.

The Triceratops charged again. They were maddened, capable of anything. The mud beneath Simon's feet grabbed at his legs like quicksand. He could barely keep his balance.

The pond stank. The water was stagnant and covered over with algae and bodies of tiny creepy crawlers. Simon slipped and fell as another Triceratops advanced on him. Bugs went up his nose and into his mouth as the water slapped his face and he sank underneath the surface. His feet went up and he landed hard on his back.

A dark form moved his way as he struggled to rise. Something round like a tree trunk rose up and thrust downward toward his chest.

It was the hoof of a Triceratops!

Simon panicked as the hoof touched his chest, pinning him in place. He couldn't breathe. He was going to drown! Or the Triceratops was going to crush him!

Suddenly, the hoof rose. Simon scrambled along the bottom of the pond, fumbling as he tried to plant his feet. Then he rose up, his head

breaking the surface. He was choking, spitting out water and gunk.

The Triceratops was right in front of him, its horns close enough to gore him. But it was frozen, and it wasn't looking his way.

Everyone had stopped. Chris and his friends had become statues, just like the Triceratops brood. They all looked afraid.

A sudden, high, piercing shriek ripped across the silence of the night. It sounded inhuman and wild. Terrifying.

Simon had read a description of this sound in Eric Kirby's book.

"Raptors," he whispered.

The sound came again, this time from another part of the woods. Then it came from the other side of the pond.

"They're everywhere," Chris said.

The Triceratops moved into action quickly. Ignoring the humans, they gathered up their young and tromped off toward a wide path between the thick trees.

"What do we do?" Chris asked, his chest heaving.

"Maybe we should split up," D.J. said with icy resolve. "I'm betting they won't follow us all."

"We stay together," Simon said.

"Together," Chris echoed.

Simon pointed in the one direction from which he hadn't heard the raptors' calls. He raced that way through the water, nearly losing his balance twice.

"It's cold, it's cold, it's cold," Biggs cried. He spun the camera around and got a close-up of his own face from a low angle. "I'm so scared! Think anyone would notice if I peed myself?"

They escaped the pond and ran shivering for the trees. The group raced headlong into the jungle, their faces smacked by low-lying branches, their feet stumbling over tangles of roots and vines. All around them, small creatures yelped and shrieked.

Had they lost the dinosaurs? Simon had no idea. He could barely see anything.

"Stay together!" he said.

"Shout off!" Chris commanded.

Biggs, D.J., and Matt said their names, letting Simon and his brother know they hadn't gone off on their own.

"Hold it," someone yelled from directly ahead. "It's all right. It's all right. . . ."

Simon drew to a stop. Biggs banged into him from behind and the two toppled to the ground. Chris helped his brother back to his feet. Matt and D.J. hauled Biggs up from the floor of the jungle.

"You're okay," said a small figure who

approached with his hands wide apart. "There aren't any raptors."

A boy who looked about Chris's age stepped into a small pool of moonlight. His face was filthy, his skin bruised and cut. His hair was matted and his clothes tattered.

"You're safe now," the small figure said. "Listen."

The young man cupped his hands and made the cry they had heard before. The raptor call.

Simon's shock was wearing off. He got close enough to study the face of their rescuer. He'd seen that face on books, magazine covers, and television interviews.

"Eric Kirby," Chris whispered in awe. "I'm Chris. This is my older brother, Simon. And these are my buds!"

Behind Chris, the others murmured happily, as if their greatest hero had unexpectedly arrived.

Simon winced. He had to do something about this, and fast, or he would lose control of the group.

"Don't make that sound again," Simon said, grabbing Eric's arm and looking around. "There might be *real* raptors in the jungle who'll hear it and come running."

"I was trying to help," Eric said.

He sounded bewildered to Simon.

Good, Simon thought. He needed to keep the intruder off balance.

"No wonder this happened," Simon said. "Hey everyone, this is Eric Kirby. The Survivor. And the kid who couldn't leave well enough alone and almost got us all killed."

"What, are you crazy?" Eric challenged. "You think this is *my* fault?"

"Makes sense," Chris said. "The dinosaurs were going to Simon. They looked curious. Then all of a sudden they went crazy!"

"They must have spotted you," Simon said. "I bet they remember you. I know I would, if I were them. And what the heck are you doing here anyway? Weren't you rescued already? I mean, wasn't that the whole point of your book tour? You were stranded. You survived. You were rescued. End of story. No?"

Eric couldn't believe what he was hearing. He'd risked his life to help these kids and now they were *baiting* him!

Then he saw the camera.

"You didn't bail from your plane because you had to, did you?" said Eric. "You came here on purpose."

"One word," Simon said. "Duh."

"Listen to me," Eric said. "I can get us back to the Park Ranger's Station. It's an enclosed com-

pound where the scientists live. It's safe there."

"Show me the way," Biggs said quickly.

Simon shook his head. "We've only just gotten started. We don't even have any footage of superpredators yet and your buddy Grant will just take our equipment and wipe our footage. We have our own way out."

"Oh, right," Chris said.

Simon nodded. "You think I wouldn't take care of a detail like that?" Simon maintained his poker face until his brother looked away.

"Of course. Yeah. You just haven't told us yet," Chris said. "Top-secret. We understand, Simon. It's cool."

Eric ran his hand over his forehead. "You don't understand. You've *got* to come with me. It's not safe."

"No, *you* don't understand," Simon said. "Your options are to go back the way you came or stay with us. There are things going on here. Things I don't know about, things I bet you don't know about either. Or did Grant let you come back here with an all-access pass?"

"I . . ." Eric looked away.

"Thought so," Simon said. He turned and walked away, his brother at his side in a second. As soon as Chris joined Simon, the others followed.

Eric watched the newcomers. They were cold,

wet, and shivering. They were probably going to get sick. Probably going to get eaten. But they had *wanted* this. They had come here thinking they would find something that would change their lives.

Just like him.

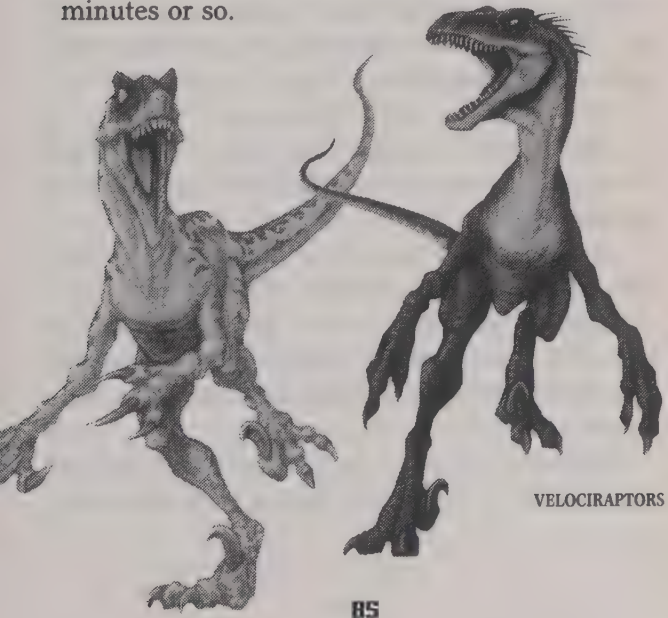
They weren't his responsibility, yet he couldn't just leave them. Silently, he knelt and drew out the stunner he had grabbed before exiting the Ranger's Station. He raised it, making sure the stinger would not touch any object, and squeezed the trigger in three short bursts. Tiny sparks fired. There was a short electrical crackle, but it seemed the design of these stunners was better than the ones he'd originally found during his weeks alone on the island.

He kept squeezing the trigger. Three long bursts, three short, three long—SOS. He looked at the night sky. A satellite was trained on this island. Would the heat signature he was providing with the stunner be noticed amid all the other data the satellite was collecting?

Eric followed the group at a distance, praying that Alan and the retrieval team would find them before the stunner's charge gave out.

CHAPTER 10

Eric was starting to feel hungry and tired even though he had been well rested before leaving the Ranger's Station. He studied Simon and the others, learning their names as they marched deeper into the jungle and performed roll call every five minutes or so.



VELOCIRAPTORS

He had to restrain a smile as he watched them go down one path, then another, that he had mapped when he was alone on Mount Hood. Simon was leading the group in circles, though he clearly didn't realize it.

At the moment they stood before the huge wall of shattered tree limbs Eric had seen earlier. Simon could find no way around it, and all the teens except Chris were really beginning to feel the effects of their run-in with the dinosaurs earlier. They shivered; they complained of aches and pains; they were jumpy and irritable and scared.

Beyond that, they were getting mad. *Good,* Eric thought. That would keep them alert—and maybe if they stayed alert, they'd stay alive.

"I see another path," Simon said.

Eric tensed, worrying that Simon would lead the teens right toward the superpredators Eric had seen earlier.

No, Eric realized. Simon headed in another direction, one Eric hadn't had time to check out.

"Sound off!" Simon said after a couple of minutes. Behind him, Chris and the others called off their names. They sounded weary and frustrated.

Was this guy Simon so worried about his control over the group that he had to keep reminding

them that he was the boss? Was that why he kept barking orders and doing roll calls?

Or was he just smart enough to know that he had to keep the teens alert and focused to avoid disaster?

Eric was beginning to think both might be true.

He was surprised as Biggs waited for him to catch up. The digital camera was on.

"How about an interview?" Biggs asked.

Eric raised the stunner and held down the trigger, making blue and white sparks streak through the darkness separating them. Biggs flinched but did not draw back.

"How about you get that stupid thing out of my face?" Eric said.

"Perfect!" Biggs said. "Man, *that's* gonna make a great sound bite!"

Eric shook his head as the camera operator went back to his friends.

Soon, the dense clusters of trees thinned and Eric saw huge gray rises ahead. He didn't like the idea of being so exposed. Human beings had very few physical advantages over dinosaurs. Being able to climb up a tree in a hurry was one of them.

But Simon ignored Eric's objections and led the teenagers to the gray rocks to rest. The steplike

ledges made natural seats for them, and a thick network of vines and branches allowed them to climb as high as they wanted.

As soon as they'd settled down at various levels, the teens broke out candy bars and began to wolf them down.

Biggs tossed Eric two chocolate bars, then sat down himself, popped open a compartment on the side of the camera, and withdrew a small silver disk. Eric watched Biggs put the old disk into the camera bag, then insert a new disk.

After eating four candy bars in a row, Biggs went back to shooting the group.

"Hey, Chris, did I tell you I got this idea for a movie?" Biggs said. "It's about this bunch of nuns, right, and they have to fill in on this military operation, and we call it *Force of Habit*!"

"There's really something wrong with you," Chris replied.

"That's why we're buds, right?" said Biggs.

"That's it." Then, just as Chris turned toward a noise from the shadows above him, a shape leaped down, claws swiping at the air.

Chris instantly launched himself from the ledge. The dinosaur shrieked and jumped, too, hissing and spitting as it sailed toward him.

But Chris snatched one of the many nearby vines and swung to the ground. When the

dinosaur tried to follow, it got tangled in the network of vines and branches instead. With a grunt, it hit the ground and started slicing at the tangle keeping it bound.

"Incoming!" D.J. yelled.

Eric turned and saw four more dinosaurs approaching, two from each side of the gray rocks.

At first Eric didn't think they were big enough to be raptors, but a second look assured him that they were indeed the very fierce Velociraptors he'd battled before on this island. Their smaller size probably meant they weren't yet full grown.

Eric drew his stunner. A sudden *thump* made him turn. Biggs had dropped the camera bag, though he still held the camera.

The closest predator advanced on Simon.

"S-stay back—s-stay back—" Simon stuttered at the young raptor, which growled and kept advancing.

"Chris!" Eric yelled. "Fastball that creep!"

Without hesitation, Chris snatched up a rock and lobbed it at the dinosaur. The stone *smacked* the dinosaur on the side of the head, sending it reeling. Eric looked around. They needed to reach higher ground—but the raptors, with their powerful legs, could leap up those ledges easily.

Eric surged forward. Before the dazed dinosaur could advance on Simon again, Eric

touched the edge of his stunner to the predator. Its long arms swept outward, its claws primed to tear into Eric's stomach, but the boy hit the trigger and made the dinosaur recoil before the blow could land.

Blue-white sparks flew into the air and the dinosaur shuddered, then fell to one side, stunned.

Eric heard a hiss and spun, raising the stunner. He squeezed the trigger as another young raptor leaped at him—but nothing happened. The weapon's charge had run out!

Whack!

The dinosaur fell to one side as a stone bounced off its skull.

Eric saw Chris standing in pitcher's stance, another rock in his hand. Next to Eric, the dinosaur he had stunned was wobbling. A sudden *crack* sounded as a large stone came down on its head. The dinosaur fell. Simon stood above it, the stone in his hands.

"Matt!" Simon said. "The bag! All that stuff from your dad's place. Now!"

Matt frantically dug into the bag and pulled out handfuls of fireworks!

Simon looked stunned. "But—you said your dad was in the military, that he worked on special weapons! Where are the *explosives*?"

"He doesn't bring that stuff home," said Matt. "I had to make do."

Matt pulled out a lighter. He flicked it once, twice; then just as a tiny flame appeared, another dinosaur leaped on him, flattening the boy against the ground. The lighter flew out of his hand—and fell right on the bag of fireworks!

Suddenly, a bright flash came from Matt's bag, accompanied by a series of thunderclaps. The attacking dinosaur leaped off of Matt in fear as blue and red and electric green sparks flew through the air and projectiles fired in every direction.

Some of the fireworks lit up the sky—popping and exploding and whistling with fury. Others shot outward and cut a path right through the struggling humans and predators. The raptors raced out of the way of the projectiles and shrieked as the fireworks struck nearby rock walls and exploded with pinwheels of fiery, blinding color, spitting sparks and heat and flame.

Simon and the other teenagers raced for cover, diving behind rocks, wedging themselves into tight crevices on the surface of the rise, or simply dropping to the ground and covering their heads.

Eric saw Biggs stand right in the middle of it all, so fascinated by the incredible images he was

capturing on camera that he had lost all sense of the danger he was in. With a holler, Eric tackled him just as a small rocket whirred toward them—and narrowly missed them, sailing over their heads.

The shouts and confusion and blinding explosions went on for several minutes, and when they stopped, Eric cautiously raised his head and looked around.

The predators were gone.

"We did it," Simon yelled. His chest was heaving, his hands shaking. "All right!"

The others slowly got to their feet. Everyone stared at Simon strangely.

"All we need is a rex or the Spinosaurus and we've got *prime time* written all over us, guys!" Simon said. "This is gonna be amazing!"

Chris looked from Simon to Eric—and back again. Everyone was shaken.

Suddenly, a roar came from behind the teens. They spun to see a pair of Humvees screech to a stop before them.

Alan and the other members of his team piled out of both vehicles. All of them wore Kevlar vests, padding, and even headgear. The scientist stopped as he took in the sight of Eric and the invaders.

"More—teenagers?" Alan couldn't believe it.

Simon snatched up the camera bag and tossed it to his brother. "Don't let anything happen to that!"

Chris nodded.

Eric walked up to Alan. "Dr. Grant, they don't want to go back with you."

"What? But that's . . ." Alan sputtered, then paused and firmly said, "I don't care. They flew over restricted airspace. They are trespassing on a UN-sanctioned animal preserve. Do you really think that I care what they *want*?"

"I'm just trying to give you a heads-up," Eric said.

The sound of tires on heavy earth made Alan and Eric turn. They saw retreating lights and realized that Simon and his crew had taken off in the other Humvee!

CHAPTER 11

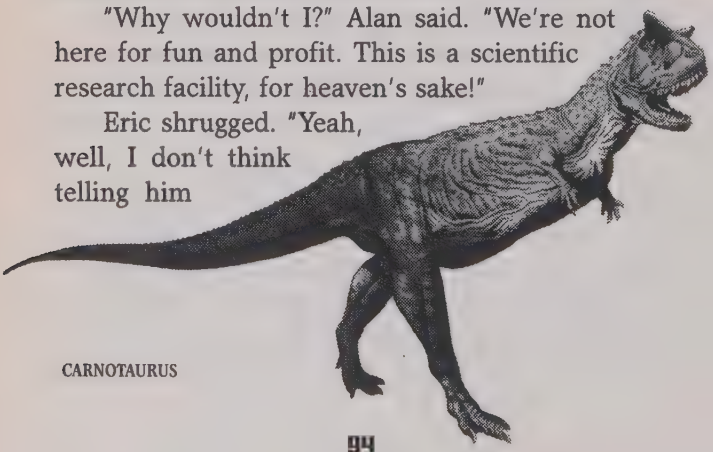
Eric and Alan were squished together in the back of the modified Humvee as Stevens drove. He tore across the rocks at a bumpy roar, following the taillights of the first Humvee. Eric couldn't bring himself to look at Alan.

"Do you have any idea where they're going?" Alan asked.

"I don't think they know," Eric said. "But this guy, Simon, doesn't trust you. He thinks you'll confiscate all the footage he's taken."

"Why wouldn't I?" Alan said. "We're not here for fun and profit. This is a scientific research facility, for heaven's sake!"

Eric shrugged. "Yeah, well, I don't think telling him



CARNOTAURUS

that is going to make him trust you any better."

"I could care less if he trusts me," Alan said. "He's just making more trouble—"

Suddenly, the Humvee swerved.

"Pothole," Stevens called back. "Lots of 'em coming up. I think something *big* passed through here when it was muddy."

Eric looked out the rear window. Sure enough, he saw giant footprints trailing away behind them.

"The road's widening," Deborah said.

Eric looked ahead. "I guess we don't have a road map or anything?"

"Work is supposed to begin on *that* in two weeks," Alan said. His face was dark.

"What do you want me to do?" Stevens called back. "I did a little stunt driving for the movies. I could probably force 'em off the road. So long as they're wearing seat belts, that and the impact bags should keep 'em from getting too banged up."

"I don't think so," Alan said.

Beside Eric, Deborah whispered, "Be gentle with him. I think it's his first car chase and he wants to show off."

Alan buried his face in his hands. "I was insane to think this would work. Ian was right."

"No," Eric said. "You can't think that way. We'll get these guys to the Ranger's Station and—"

The Humvee swerved again. Stevens started yelling. "They went right over one of the potholes! They could have blown out the axle! You know how much work I'm gonna have to do on that vehicle by the time these kids are done with it?"

Alan leaned forward. "Stevens?"

"Yeah?"

"Shut up and drive."

Stevens fell silent. Eric noticed a slight smile of satisfaction on Alan's face as the man settled back.

Suddenly, they were swerving one way, then the other, the Humvee bouncing, rising up on one side, and falling hard.

The ride got bumpier. Alan hit his head on the roof.

"Stevens!" Alan said.

"You told me to shut up," Stevens said. "So how was I supposed to warn you guys?"

Eric watched the road ahead. Stevens had the floodlights on. So did Simon and his team. The thick twisted trees rising up on either side of them made it look like a haunted forest.

Three forks appeared in the road ahead.

"Wait a minute, I remember being here," Eric said. "All three branches come out at the same place. We can—"

"Got it, Stevens?" Alan asked.

"My pleasure," Stevens said.

Eric watched as Simon's car headed toward the center lane, then turned abruptly to the right with a loud screech of tires and—

A roar?

"Hard target, dead ahead!" Deborah said.

Eric's eyes opened wide as he saw a two-story Carnotaurus leap out from the center branch at the lead Humvee. Simon's car sped down the right branch—but the dinosaur stepped out behind it and cut off the narrow path.

"Left, left, cut left!" Alan hollered.

The Humvee sped to the left path as the Carnotaurus raced toward them, maw snapping. Eric could feel the thump of its heavy footsteps vibrating through the car's frame.

The dinosaur closed on them and they passed within a few feet of its towering bulk. Eric looked back and saw its head swoop down and fill the back window—then they were clear!

"Twists and turns, people!" Stevens hollered.

The road zigzagged. Eric and the others were tossed around like luggage in an airport carrier. Eric felt a thundering that he was certain came from his wildly beating heart—until he looked out the right-hand side of the Humvee.

The Carnotaurus was racing along the center path, keeping pace with them.

"Stevens!" Alan yelled.

"If I go any faster, I'll flip us," Stevens said. "Besides, wasn't I supposed to shut up or something?"

Alan was about to reply when they hit another bump. Eric lurched in his chair, the seat belt cutting into his ribs, and Alan grunted as his head again struck the roof.

Alan looked to Deborah. "Is there anything you can do?"

"Not while we're moving," she said. "Too dangerous for us."

"I've got a flare gun," Eric offered. "Maybe it'll scare him."

"Or maybe it'll set the woods on fire," Alan said.

Eric grabbed the seat as they took a hard turn and cleared the junction of the three forks.

"He does not look happy," Dan said, nodding out the window toward the approaching Carnotaurus.

"He's gonna be a lot less happy in a second," Stevens said. He floored it, and they zipped past the angry predator, leaving him far behind as they passed into a wide open flat land. Eric could see the walls of mountains on either side of this valley, but they appeared at least a half-mile distant either way.

"Wait," Alan said as they sped forward.

"Stevens, slow down!" The Humvee slowed. The dinosaur wasn't even trying to follow anymore.

"We lost it!" Stevens said. "I am *so* the man, oh, yes, I am!"

"Right, yes, of course you are," Alan said. "But we also lost Simon and the rest."

Eric looked around. The other Humvee hadn't emerged from the three forks. It was still back there somewhere.

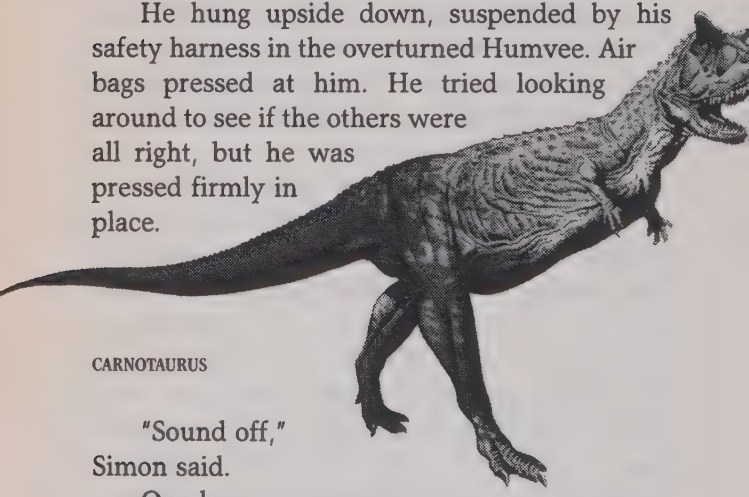
And so was the Carnotaurus.

CHAPTER 12

Simon Tunney's skull was throbbing. He felt as if all the blood was rushing to his head.

It was.

He hung upside down, suspended by his safety harness in the overturned Humvee. Air bags pressed at him. He tried looking around to see if the others were all right, but he was pressed firmly in place.



CARNOTAURUS

"Sound off," Simon said.

One by one, everyone replied. Then there was movement as they all began to climb out of their safety harnesses. All but one—

"I'm stuck," Chris said. "Somebody get me out of this thing."

Opening a small compartment above, Simon scrambled back as a batch of tools fell toward him. Rummaging through them, he found a pocketknife and used it to release Chris's belt and cut him loose from the confining air bag. Matt and D.J. helped him lower his brother to the overturned roof. Biggs remained upside down, silently capturing the drama with his camera.

"You okay?" asked Simon.

"Yeah, and I think—"

"What?" Simon asked. Then he followed his brother's frozen gaze, looking over his shoulder and through the left-side window.

The Carnotaurus was looking in.

"Everyone stay very still," Simon said. "This is just like what happened with Lex and Tim. But we can learn from their mistakes. No sudden movements. They track by movement. No bright light. And—"

"That was a T. rex," Chris pointed out. "Lex and Tim had a T. rex after them. This isn't a T. rex."

With a growl, the dinosaur slammed its head into the side of the Humvee. The glass didn't break. The animal charged and smashed at the overturned car, but all it could do was send the

vehicle rocking a few feet one way or another.

"It's not getting in," Simon said firmly.

What he didn't mention was that *they* weren't getting *out*.

Stevens pulled up a few hundred feet before the Carnotaurus, who was punishing the overturned Humvee in the distance. Deborah was the first one out of the vehicle, and she had a sonic cannon primed before Alan and Eric could even get to her side. She handed the weapon to Alan and unholstered her tranquilizer guns.

The headlights of the overturned Humvee pierced the darkness and bounced off the raging dinosaur.

"Eric, wait in the car," Alan said.

But Eric didn't budge.

Alan trembled with frustration. "I don't have time for this. Go back to the car."

"How are we going to do this?" Eric asked. "There isn't enough room in the Humvee for all of us and all of them."

Alan looked to the car behind him—and realized that Eric was right.

"Two teams," Deborah said steadily. "Those in the car ride shotgun for the ones on foot. It'll take longer, but we'll make it back."

"You see?" Alan said. "There."

In seconds, only Stevens was still with the Humvee.

"No way am I going out there," Stevens said. "I'm just the wheelman. You can't pay me enough."

Deborah turned to Chuck, one of the two bulky security men who had come with her. "Make sure he doesn't bolt."

Chuck nodded, went around to the passenger side—and slid next to Stevens.

"Personal space, personal space, you cretin," Stevens muttered.

Chuck didn't even look at the man.

Alan turned to Eric. "For the last time—"

"Alan," Deborah said. "Eric's clocked more battle hours against dinosaurs than anyone on the planet. I think he *should* be with us."

There was no more time left to debate. "Come on," Alan said.

The group rushed in.

Eric stayed close to Deborah as they ran toward the dinosaur. He had the flare gun in one hand, the grenades in a satchel tied around his waist.

For some reason, he wasn't afraid. He knew he should have been, but the fear wasn't there.

"Don't use that unless you have to," Deborah said, nodding to the flare gun. "If he's wounded,

he'll just be harder to put down. And all we want to do is drive him off. Not hurt him any more than we have to."

Eric nodded, but he was only half-listening. Despite the shouts and the commotion all around him, his world was becoming still and quiet.

He wasn't just prey. He had control over his life.

That had to be true. It had to be. . . .

Then the Carnotaurus turned and looked at him—and all the sounds and sensations came rushing back. The moment the dinosaur opened his dripping maw and looked his way, the fear returned. And when it roared—

"Eric, no!" Alan shouted.

But the flare gun was raised and aimed right at the animal's gaping mouth.

Alan reached for Eric's hand. He saw the boy's finger tighten on the trigger of the weapon.

Then release.

He didn't take the shot.

Alan couldn't begin to understand the things that were driving Eric, all that was inside him that had pushed him to return to Isla Sorna. But he had a sense that the kid's conflicts were far from over. Alan took the flare gun from Eric and placed it in the bag he carried slung over his shoulder.

"Alan, Drew, *now*!" Deborah hollered.

Alan stepped away from Eric and raised the sonic cannon. He released the safety and pulled the trigger. A sudden force drove him back. He had forgotten to anchor himself. He heard a high, sharp wail and felt waves of force pouring from the weapon he held. Planting his legs solidly, he kept the weapon aimed at the predator's giant head while Drew fired a high-powered taser.

The dinosaur stumbled back, moving away from the overturned Humvee. The Carnotaurus roared in surprise, turning and flailing with its small arms and sharp, brutal claws. The headlights caught the trees behind the dinosaur, and as it turned, Alan saw the animal's bright crimson back.

Alan *knew* this dinosaur. Months ago he had stared into its eyes when the animal had been subjected to fear and humiliation and *Alan* had had the upper hand. There was no way he could have forgotten that moment. From the way the animal was staring at him now, Grant was certain it had not forgotten either.

With a roar, the dinosaur drove itself forward, one foot landing on the underside of the Humvee, near one of its front tires. It smashed down so hard that the overturned car suddenly flipped onto one side, the driver's door now facing the ground. With another roar, the Carnotaurus bit down on the

passenger door—and yanked it free! Now the interior of the car was exposed! The dinosaur whipped its head to one side, flinging the door at the group of humans.

Alan and the others scattered as the door hit the ground and flipped several times before smashing into a grove of trees. Deborah moved forward, taking careful aim. She fired, sending one huge tranquilizer dart into the animal's shoulder and another into its neck.

The dinosaur hollered in rage and stumbled back.

"Alan, Drew!" Deborah commanded.

Alan fired the sonic cannon again. The dinosaur began to retreat, heading back along the road toward Stevens and the one remaining Humvee.

Alan watched as Stevens jammed the vehicle into reverse, trying to flee the oncoming predator.

"No, wait!" Alan hollered.

But it was too late. Stevens drove straight back into a gigantic pothole. The Humvee tipped backward, crashing down into the hole, its front wheels spinning high in the moonlight. The dinosaur staggered toward it, focusing its rage.

"Stevens!" Alan cried. "Chuck!"

Stevens looked up just in time to see the Carnotaurus dropping toward him.

"C'mon!" called Chuck, and he pulled Stevens free of the driver's side just as the beast smashed down and the roof caved in.

A second later, the two were running full speed down the road and back to the rest of the group, all of whom were watching, mouths agape, as the enraged Carnotaurus proceeded to take apart the ditched Humvee for another minute, then wobble and stumble off into the jungle.

Simon and his team now stood before Alan and his team. Eric was off to one side, watching Alan and Simon stare at each other. Biggs was still shooting the whole thing.

"What are you? Sixteen?" Alan asked.

"Eighteen," Simon said.

"Good," Alan said. "Then you can be tried as an adult when we get you back to the States."

Simon's gaze narrowed. "On what charges?"

"Kidnapping, child endangerment, trespassing—and that's just for starters," Alan said.

Simon smiled. "First you have to get us there, don't you? And it's a pretty long way."

Alan opened his mouth to speak, but a horrible roar suddenly ripped through the night. Everyone turned just as the red-backed Carnotaurus surged out of the darkness again. It seemed to be heading right for Alan. But before it could get to the scientist, Chuck ran forward,

waving his arms. In an instant, the dinosaur's head dipped down and its maw covered Chuck's head and shoulders.

"No!" Deborah screamed, seeing the dinosaur sink its teeth into a trusted member of her security team, instantly killing him.

Eric lobbed a concussion grenade at the dinosaur's feet. It exploded, knocking the animal off balance.

"This way!" Eric yelled as he pointed toward the forest.

Then another Carnotaurus appeared directly ahead of the thirteen-year-old, cutting him off. And from behind the one that had killed Chuck, a third arrived.

The pack was complete, Alan realized. And their prey was exactly where they wanted them.

CHAPTER 13

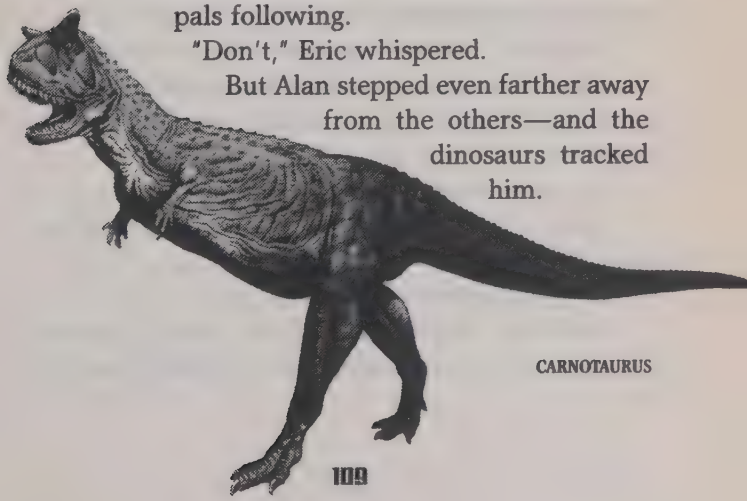
Eric didn't know why the two tranquilizer darts hadn't put the red-backed Carnotaurus down. Alan's medical officer had said something about the dinosaur's enhanced immune systems. And even now, Dan Caulfield stared at the dinosaurs with a mixture of wonder, fear, respect, and anger.

"Time for an experiment," Alan said. He stepped away from the others.

Big Red took a step in his direction, his two pals following.

"Don't," Eric whispered.

But Alan stepped even farther away from the others—and the dinosaurs tracked him.



CARNOTAURUS

Eric grabbed Deborah's arm. Her features were cool with concentration.

"You've got more weapons," Eric said. "You've got to have a plan."

"We're outgunned and we're on level terrain," Deborah said. "We need to save what we have until we're left with no choice."

"There's a choice, all right," Simon said. He pointed at Alan. "They want *him*!"

"Not as dumb as he looks, is he?" Alan said. Sweat was pouring off him. He set the sonic cannon on the ground, then looked at Deborah, who nodded.

Then he glanced at Eric. "You know what to do."

Eric frantically shook his head. "We're not gonna abandon you!"

"Not your choice," Alan said. "My decision."

"No," Eric said. He slipped his hand into his pouch, looking for the second of his concussion grenades.

It wasn't there.

Eric looked around—and saw Simon holding the grenade.

"Not a chance," Simon said.

Suddenly, Alan ran toward the woods. The trio of Carnotaurus raced after him. Deborah dashed

forward, snatching up the sonic cannon.

"Drew, suppression fire, give him a fighting chance," Deborah hollered. She moved out of the way as the charging predators followed Alan, then took aim and hit them hard to slow them down. They faltered, giving Alan the time he needed to reach the trees. Then they pressed on, mowing down the trees and tearing the jungle apart in their chase.

"Eric, we need a safe place," Deborah said. "The safest place you can think of that's near here."

Eric thought of a place. "But Alan—"

"Everybody makes choices," Deborah said. "Don't throw this away on him."

Nodding, Eric headed away from the jungle, toward the rises in the far distance.

Simon Tunney ran with Chris and the others after Eric and his group.

"I don't get it," Chris said. "You said we had another way off the island. Why go with them?"

"I need you to trust me," Simon said. "I always catch you when you fall, right? For as long as you can remember?"

Chris nodded. "Always."

"Same deal now."

They ran toward the rock wall. At first, Simon saw nothing but darkness; then a dull, blue-white fissure appeared.

Makes sense, Simon thought. *We couldn't get deep enough into the jungle to get away from those Carnotaurus, not in time, but we can slip between the cracks.*

And that was exactly what Simon planned to do if anyone tried to press charges against him: he'd slip between the cracks. He had it all worked out. He was in total control.

For once.

After this adventure was over, no one would be able to dictate to him again, the way his parents had all his life. He'd have the money—and the power—to run the show.

Eric had told them that the rescue reinforcements would be arriving by morning. Simon knew that after the message he'd sent last night to a major cable news channel that they wouldn't be the only ones.

All along, that had been Simon's secret exit strategy. He could think of no better advertisement for his documentary than the worldwide broadcasting of a news chopper airlifting his team off Isla Sorna!

The entire group came to the fissure as the trio

of Carnotaurus appeared in the distance, thundering their way.

Didn't take them long, Simon thought. He had figured Alan Grant would have given the dinosaurs more of a challenge.

"Come on, through here!" Eric yelled as he stopped at the mouth of the fissure and ushered everyone through it. The fissure was ten feet high, three feet across. Big enough for raptors or human beings. But way too small for superpredators.

Biggs caught some footage of the charging dinosaurs—then Simon hauled him through the opening. They passed Eric, who wouldn't even look their way. Instead, he scanned the dark horizon for any sign of Alan Grant.

Good luck, kid, Simon thought. Then he passed through the high stone corridor into what looked like a vast, bowl-shaped valley lined with huge stone obelisks. It was like a maze, with rows of domino-shaped rocks that reached four or five stories high, the same height as the valley walls enclosing them.

"There's no other way in or out," Eric said from the mouth of the six-foot-deep corridor.

Simon and Biggs wandered back to the mouth of the corridor, Biggs shooting more footage of the approaching beasts. Eric and Deborah looked as grim as Alan Grant on a good day.

"There isn't a chance, is there?" Eric asked.

Deborah put her hand on Eric's shoulder. "They said the same thing about you. If Alan's out there, we'll find him."

They all watched as the trio of dinosaurs raced toward the crevice.

"Can't they see it's too small for them?" Eric said. "They're going to bash their heads in!"

"Probably," Deborah said. She looked up at the rock overhead. "But there isn't much we can do about it. Our weapons might cause a cave-in if we used them to try and slow the animals down. We'd better get farther inside."

Eric nodded and turned. Simon signaled Biggs to withdraw. In seconds, they were inside the ancient arena.

Biggs took the latest disk from the digital recorder and exchanged it for a new one from the bag Chris held.

The ground began to shake. Bits of rock fell from the inner stone wall of the valley.

Simon heard an earth-shattering slam and thought he actually saw the wall *bulge*. Of course, that was impossible. Wasn't it?

Moments later, he heard the thundering footfalls again. Then more crashes. This time, enough heavy rock fell that the entire group had to move

back, and everyone was looking around anxiously.

Simon waited. It seemed like an eternity before the footfalls came again, and this time the wall exploded outward! The red-backed Carnotaurus burst into the arena, his friends right behind him.

The huge dinosaurs had actually crashed through the rock crevices!

Everyone ran. Simon heard explosions and the high-pitched wail of weapons behind him, but he did not look back. The only person he kept in his line of view was his brother, Chris—because he held the bag with all their camera footage. Simon's future was in that bag!

Behind them, the Carnotaurus roared. Simon heard confused shouts. Something about climbing. He looked for spaces between the large, rectangular stones that would be too small for the Carnotaurus to push within, or corners around which he could hide.

High above, soft blue streaks filtered across the sky. The dawn was coming, and it would only make it harder for them to hide from the raging predators!

Simon heard a roar. He looked over his shoulder and saw one of the Carnotaurus heading right for him. Simon grabbed Chris's arm and yanked

him around a tight corner. The predator followed, smashing into the side of an obelisk. It growled in defiance and kept coming.

Chris stumbled. The bag slid off his shoulder as he fell. His head hit a rock and he twisted his ankle. The dinosaur advanced, his maw reaching down to snatch up Chris, one gigantic foot about to crush the camera bag.

Simon saw Chris look up and reach out with one hand.

Simon had a clear choice. His brother's life—or the footage that would bring him riches, power, and fame.

"Sorry, Chris," he said as he reached for the bag.

But really, he wasn't. There had to be one heroic sacrifice, one tragic casualty, and who better to create sympathy than Simon's own brother? In a split second, Simon knew he'd buy the kid a memorial, get a special song written. He could almost see himself giving tearful black-suited interviews on all those morning talk shows.

Simon grabbed the bag and dived for an opening between two of the obelisks. Then a blur moved past him, yanking Chris away just as the dinosaur's jaws snapped shut on empty air!

It was *Eric*!

But the little jerk had only bought Chris and himself seconds. The Carnotaurus's maw opened and its head drove down toward its prey.

Suddenly, a noise came from above: the steady beating of a helicopter's propellers. The Carnotaurus looked up—and a net fell from the sky. It crackled with blue-white electricity as it fell about the predator's head and upper body. The Carnotaurus wailed in frustration; then a small batch of concussion bombs exploded around it as three successive tranquilizer darts penetrated its scaly hide. It went down hard, making the ground shake.

It was over.

Simon came out from cover. He saw the other two Carnotaurus being attacked by the crews of incoming choppers, and soon they were brought down, too.

He heard footsteps behind him—and turned to see his brother's face. Chris was stunned. His brother's betrayal appeared almost beyond his comprehension.

Almost—but not quite. Eric stood beside him, his eyes narrow and glaring with anger.

Simon shrugged. "If you can't prove it, it didn't happen," he told Eric. "A cable news crew will be here any minute. *They'll* get my footage, not

Grant's UN team. I've already made the deal. I'm the hero. The star. Be smart and you can still get your cut."

Three figures stepped out from a groove between two of the rectangular towers a dozen feet away.

"We all saw what you did," Matt said.

Biggs raised the camera. "And I got it on digital."

Simon felt himself go pale.

For the first time in his life, he had nothing to say.

Eric was with Deborah, watching the closest of the unconscious Carnotaurus. The helicopters were dropping as low as they could, extending ladders to take everyone out of the valley.

"Why *did* you want to come back here?" Deborah asked Eric. "Did you find what you were looking for?"

Eric glanced away. "Not exactly. But—it's like something Ray said. I didn't find what I wanted, but I think I got what I needed." He shrugged. "Guess I just needed to remember why this place *isn't* where I belong."

Deborah's radio chirped. She turned away quickly as she spoke into the receiver. "Uh-huh. Right. Got it."

Her face was stone as she handed the headset to Eric. "For you."

He took the radio and slipped the headset on. A voice squawked on the other end. "So, Eric, how was your little visit to our island? Exciting enough for you?"

Eric couldn't believe the voice he was hearing. "Dr. Grant? How did you—I mean, where . . ."

A small laugh sounded in his ears. "Where? Look up."

The closest of the helicopters hung almost directly overhead. A ladder extended from it, reaching down to Eric.

"And the *how* is easy—I hid and they got bored," Alan said. "I learned that little trick from a guy who lived here for eight weeks."

Eric spun and hugged Deborah. "He's okay!"

She smiled. "I know. I just didn't want to ruin your surprise."

The ladder came closer.

"I don't know if you're ever going to want to come back here or not," Deborah said. "People make things way too complicated sometimes. But one thing I would think about if I were you?"

"What's that?"

"The same thing someone told me when I was about your age," Deborah said. "Good advice that stuck."

Eric waited.

Deborah grinned as the first rays of morning struck her face. "Life isn't too generous with second chances. So don't waste them when they come along."

Eric nodded. "Yeah. I get it."

Suddenly, the sound of a young man loudly cursing caught his attention. He looked up to see Simon Tunney in the doorway of one of the choppers. No sooner had he stepped inside than a security guard had him in handcuffs.

"Hope they get *that* on film, too," said Deborah with a smile. Then she caught the dangling ladder and pushed it toward Eric. "Ready to go back to the compound?"

"I'm ready to go back," said Eric. "To my parents. And Enid."

Deborah laughed. "Not looking so bad after all?"

"You got that right," said Eric.

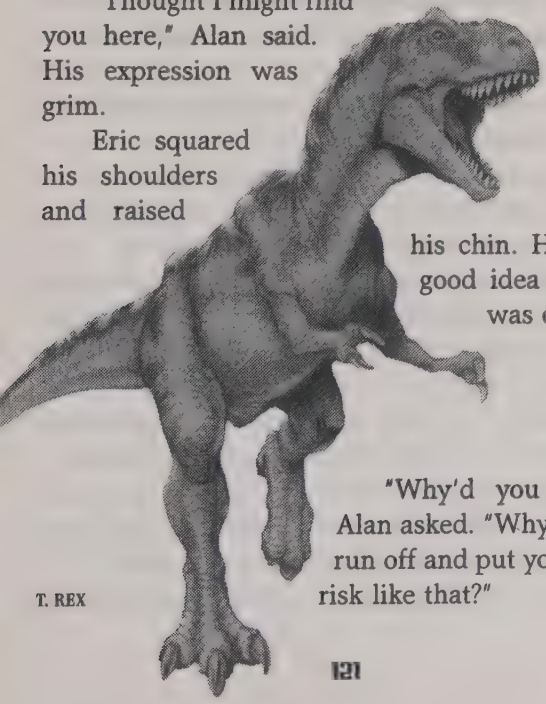
CHAPTER 14

Eric stood alone in the observatory, staring at the jungle in the distance. He heard footsteps and turned as Alan walked into the room.

"Thought I might find you here," Alan said. His expression was grim.

Eric squared his shoulders and raised his chin. He had a good idea of what was coming.

"Why'd you do it?" Alan asked. "Why did you run off and put yourself at risk like that?"



T. REX

Studying his shoes, Eric said, "Those guys, they needed help—"

"And that's what me and my team are here for," Alan said. "The *truth*."

Eric turned back to the window. He heard a predator roar in the distance. "I thought I missed this place. That I left a part of myself out there. But I didn't."

"So now you have to look somewhere else?"

Eric shook his head. "No. I found it. It wasn't lost, just—buried. Enid may not feel the same anymore, but it's my home. It's where I should be. At least until I'm older."

"You disobeyed my orders," Alan said. "You broke our agreement."

"I know."

"I should keep you from ever setting foot in this place again," Alan said.

Eric looked down. "That's too bad. I mean, I'm proud of the station. The research you're doing. Proud I had something to do with helping you get this far."

"Well . . . ," Alan sighed. "Your actions also saved lives. You were very brave. Smart, too."

Surprised, Eric looked up at the scientist. Alan's face was still rigid, but there was a flicker of something in his eyes. Could it be . . . pride?

"What would you do if I offered you a second

chance?" Alan asked. "If I gave you a chance to come back here in six months or so, when the compound is fully operational?"

Eric couldn't believe what he was hearing. Still . . . he wasn't sure he should say yes so soon. "I'd have to think about it," he finally answered. "I mean, I'd have to discuss it with my parents. Make sure it's the right thing to do."

Alan smiled. "Just the answer I was looking for." As he placed his hand on Eric's shoulder, a caw drew his attention to the large window.

A Pteranodon was swooping down from the sky and sailing over the mesh enclosure of the Ranger's Station. It let out another caw and sailed to the east, toward the early morning sun.

"Well, hopefully by then things will have settled down," Alan said.

Eric watched as a rex smashed a tree in the distance and snapped at the air as the Pteranodon flew overhead.

"Settled down?" teased Eric. *"Here?"*

Alan laughed. Then they both turned back to the window to watch the sun rise higher over the amazing, savage landscape.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SCOTT CIENCIN is a bestselling author of adult and children's fiction. Praised by *Science Fiction Review* as "one of today's finest fantasy writers" and listed in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy,* Scott has written over forty works, many published by Warner, Avon, and TSR. For Random House Children's Publishing, Scott has been a favorite author in the popular DINOTOPIA series, for which he's written six titles: *Windchaser, Thunder Falls, Sky Dance, Lost City, Return to Lost City,* and *The Explorers.*

Among Scott's other recent projects is the children's series DINOVERSE, a six-book fantasy adventure that takes readers on an exciting and humorous journey through the Age of Dinosaurs. Scott's DINOVERSE titles include: *I Was a Teenage T. Rex* (#1), *The Teens Time Forgot* (#2), *Raptor Without a Cause* (#3), *Please Don't Eat the Teacher!* (#4), *Beverly Hills Brontosaurus* (#5), and *Dinosaurs Ate My Homework* (#6).

Scott has also directed for television and scripted comic books. He lives in Florida with his wife, Denise.

PREY

A band of teenagers armed with video cameras and what they think are "the rules of the island" illegally sneak into Jurassic Park. But their dream of making a blockbuster dinosaur documentary turns into a nightmare because dinosaurs don't play by anyone's rules.

An Original Novel

Can paleontologist Dr. Alan Grant and thirteen-year-old Eric Kirby save them? Or will they all become prey?

Don't miss the next
JURASSIC PARK™ ADVENTURES book

FLYERS

Universal Studios Consumer Pr
is a proud sponsor of dinosa
www.jpinstitute.cc

UNIVERSAL

BOXTREE £3.99
www.panmacmillan.com
ISBN 0-7522-1979-0
90100
9 780752 219790

KS-253-340